



Walking contested ground: navigating  
settler-colonial place through drawing and  
printmaking

by

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Antonia Aitken  
12.6.18

## Abstract

This project considers how the slow, rhythmic and repetitive movements inherent in the embodied actions of walking, printmaking and drawing generate sensitive responses to place. This project aims to acknowledge the complexity within place relationships that bear witness to the imprint of settler-colonialism. The project addresses the growing need to consider how we come to terms with the discomfort of contradictory sets of experiences that are part of walking in contested lands.

Walking enables a slowed-down and embodied attentiveness to navigate relationships with place. Perceptions of linear time dissolve to reveal a complex merging and co-mingling of observations, memories and imaginings. This methodology develops a sense of a simultaneously moving internal and external passage; an entangled or knotted time which is reflected in the conceptual, visual and material explorations within this project.

*lutruwita* / Tasmania is a place with vibrant and resistant Aboriginal culture. It has a strong and diverse community made up of interconnected narratives; people who are finding and testing new ways to voice the stories of this place. I relocated from Canberra to Hobart in 2014 to undertake this project and began my relationship by enacting a daily ritual of stepping out my front door and *into* relation with my immediate environment. Over four years I have walked a web of connection between my place of dwelling and a number of key locations in and around the Hobart region.

Informed by a material knowledge of printmaking and drawing, and expanded through 3D-fabrication technologies, sound and video, the studio research has engaged an iterative making process mirroring the repetitive looping motions and the entangling of thought embedded in the walking body. Two forms emerged as central to the work during the early stages of the project: the holdfast, from the giant kelp (*Macrocystis pyrifera*) found on Bruny Island, and a series of stick shelters encountered in the Knocklofty Reserve on the flanks of *kunanyi* / Mount Wellington. Gaston Bachelard's notion of the *image cluster* has been used in relation to these two forms to communicate my shifting feelings of entanglement, attachment and dislodgement.

This research is situated within the interdisciplinary fields of walking-based practice and critical place inquiry. Led by place philosophers, Indigenous scholars, artists and sociologists, research and pedagogies from these fields re-emphasise the importance of embodied knowledge, notions of motility, porosity and heterogeneity in our conceptualisations of place. These ideas counter dominant colonising ideas of fixity, impermeable boundaries and monologue.

Arriving in Hobart to undertake the project, I was met by an unfamiliar sense of *place panic*, described by philosopher Edward S. Casey as a feeling of estrangement or displacement commonly associated with separation from one place and the experience of a new and unfamiliar place. This experience directed the project towards a deeper investigation of philosophical concepts of place, *home-place* attachment, and desires for lost intimacy with land. This discussion has been supported by the writings of contemporary Australian philosopher Val Plumwood, writer Ross Gibson, and anthropologist Deborah Bird-Rose. By investigating the work of artists Marlene Creates, Richard Long, James Tylor, Simryn Gill and Julie Gough, the project further explores the ways in which our personal and cultural desires, losses and longings inherently shape our conceptualisations of and relationships with place.

Within the field of walking-based practice, my work contributes to the linkage between settler-colonial places and the use of walking methodologies to support the development of dialogical relations. Whilst acknowledging that walking is not exempt from contestation, this project presents new knowledge in regard to these ideas and the use of walking-based practice through the development of strategies and approaches to navigating concerns around trespass and invasion. This methodology opens up a form of embodied and relational dialogue that leads to meaningful ongoing relationships with place, including important intercultural connections. The research outcomes contribute to decolonising modes of practice by developing an ethical relationship and methodology for approaching contested ground as a settler Australian artist through process. The research proposes that such approaches and practices are both critically necessary and central to acknowledging the complex histories that lie within our land.



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## Introduction

For the body's action, corporeal journeying, is a matter of kinesis, not of phora. Kinetic action means not just change of position, literal transportation, but an implantation that changes the very matter in which it moves, opening up the soil with the soles of its fast-moving feet. The matter is not just marked, much less represented; it is altered in its very identity. Not just physically extended, it is dynamically charged with bodily motion (Casey 1993, p. 104).

The place I walk is an ancient continent imprinted with geological markers of epochal climatic shifts, of sea rises and falls, and the evolution of unique and remarkable life-supporting ecosystems. Human tracks have crisscrossed this place for millennia. The foot-worn pathways are an intimate sign of a complex web of interconnected relations; impressions shaped by the cadence, speed and weight of moving bodies in direct relation with the ground.

My early childhood was spent in the red desert sands of central Australia, a place simmering with the stories, myths and legends of a deep and continuing Aboriginal culture – knowledge that is still sung, visualised and imagined into being as part of daily practice. I grew up with an awareness of, and shame associated with, the blistering imprint of ongoing settler-colonialism in which my ancestors were complicit, and to which I bear witness. It is these interwoven experiences, cultural narratives and complex foundations that underpin this creative research inquiry.

My walking body moves in a rhythmic synchronicity of breath, step and thought. It enables a mode of being in, and of moving through, place, with a slowed-down and heightened sensory attentiveness. As the porosity of my body is revealed through movement and repetition, perceptions of linear time dissolve to expose a complex shifting and merging of observation, memory and imagining.

This project aims to consider how a walking-based methodology aligned with the iterative making processes of printmaking and drawing can generate sensitive responses to settler-colonial places. I set out to ask if these methodologies could shift the very matter and frameworks in which I stand. Situating the research within the interdisciplinary fields of walking-based practice and critical place inquiry, my creative research practice contributes to contemporary decolonising discussions.

There is a growing awareness among artists, academia, and the community more broadly, of the need to pursue methodologies that can undo colonial systems of power and lead us towards consensual and reciprocal dialogue with place (Simpson 2017, Rose 2004, Tuck & McKenzie 2015, Plumwood 2002). Mobility is coming to be regarded as an important concept which offers an alternative to the notions of fixity, impermeable boundaries and monologue that are foundational to the colonial ideology. Motile engagements blur the boundaries between places, by enabling us to recognise the significant and necessary interconnections between places. In doing so, those of us with arrival and settler narratives can shift our models of home-place attachment to consider models of fluid entanglement.

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In early 2013, I spent ten days in Queenstown, a gold and copper mining town on Tasmania's West Coast. Along with six local, national and international artists I was invited for a short, but intensive, period to reflect on the place using the language of printmaking. With walking as my primary method and medium for interpretation, I made a series of creative works that were informed by my daily field walks. This visit to Tasmania and the artwork that came from it had a significant impact on my practice and became the impetus to relocate from Canberra to Tasmania in early 2014 to undertake a PhD. Before arriving in Tasmania to commence this project, I had proposed to respond to Queenstown in relation to other mine sites in Australia and North America that were already informing my practice. I was going to look at vestiges of industrial colonisation and how this form of appropriation of land has shaped our perceptions of place.

Sometimes we start out on a walk with a clear route we wish to take, marking it onto a physical map or mentally plotting it before we travel. Once in stride we sometimes discover that the unexpected terrain we encounter requires us to stop and re-consider the path we have taken. We might find ourselves needing to reverse our steps or take a tangential sidestep. The very action of moving or relocating myself to Tasmania sent me into a surprising period of anxiety – a feeling I have come to understand as a kind of *place panic*. *Place panic* is a term described by philosopher Edward S. Casey (1993) as a common experience of anxiety when displaced or separated from one place and experiencing an unfamiliar one. I realised that, while I had travelled widely and made work in many places, I had always been a visitor, returning home to Canberra to unpack the results of my interaction.

The process of relocating my place of dwelling raised a series of unanticipated and fundamental questions. Notably, how do we identify with, conceptualise and understand notions of *place*? And how do we contemplate these notions within the complex and contested ground of contemporary Australia, where trespass and invasion are an often uncomfortable part of the discussion?

I decided that I needed to reconsider the sites for my inquiry. Instead of travelling *out* to a place quite separate from my place of dwelling, I decided to develop a project that began with a step from the front door and *in* to my immediate environment of Hobart. With walking as my methodology for encountering place, and drawing and printmaking as my core mediums for interpretation, the project's creative outcomes document the beginning of this place relationship and the conceptual questions this place has raised.

Two key places have informed the research. The first is Bruny Island, where I walked in the early stages of the project. Standing on Lighthouse Bay on Cape Bruny, I experienced a profound realisation of the devastating impact of colonial occupation of Tasmania, resulting in a deeply sad sense of absence in the land. A holdfast from the giant kelp (*Macrocystis pyrifera*) found whilst walking there became a key visual and conceptual form within the project. This strange, sinuous anchor has been used to explore notions of entangled relations; it serves as a metaphor for fluid attachments with place. Supported by the ideas presented in Tim Ingold's sociological study, *The Life of Lines* (2015), I have come to understand that the success of our relation or entanglement in contemporary Australia will be measured by our capacity to hold on in a way that also moves with the changeable environment in which we are embedded.

The second place is Knocklofty Reserve, an unassuming ridge of bushland on the North-western edge of Hobart. Within walking distance of where I lived for three and a half years (of the four-year project), I made regular looped routes from my front door into the reserve. In Knocklofty, I came across a series of makeshift shelters. These have been fundamental to my visual and conceptual thinking regarding home-place attachment and longings for lost intimacy with land as discussed through reflecting on my own childhood cubby making, the theories of Gaston Bachelard concerning 'nests', and the works of key artists, Marlene Creates and James Tylor.

Bachelard's (2014) notion of the *image cluster* also became an important way to describe the conceptual merging of the holdfast and the shelter. Together, they communicate my shifting feelings throughout the project of attachment and displacement. The iterative processes of printmaking and drawing have been used to reveal and conceal these two forms within complex matrices. Through reproduction, translation and transformation of the images through various drawing, printmaking, photography and 3D-fabrication techniques, I have been able to create works that describe my growing understanding of a knotted sense of time and enfolding relation with place. The printmaking matrix mimics the matrix of place and my slow entanglement with it.

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Walking is my methodology for encounter with place. Walking is situated within interdisciplinary realms of research and inquiry. Contemporary place-based research methodologies in the creative arts, social sciences and Indigenous scholarship are exploring walking as an embodied research and pedagogical method for dialogical thinking, making and conversing. It is considered a powerful mode of mobile resistance, in a world and at a time when to walk has almost become a radical choice. I have drawn on this expansive field to contextualise my project. Key writers and philosophers, such as Rebecca Solnit (2001), Robert MacFarlane (2012) and Frederic Gros (2014), explore the various histories of walking in the West. With the renewed interest in walking, there is a growing number of online research hubs and collectives, largely based in the UK, which continue a long tradition of exploration into the poetic and aesthetic dimensions of walking. The University of Sunderland's *W.A.L.K* (Walking, Art, Landskip and Knowledge) research group and *Walking Artists Network* (based at the University of East London) provide online networks to link walking artists and research projects from around the world. Sociologist Tim Ingold and anthropologist Jo Lee Vergunst have also addressed walking within the realms of embodied ethnographic research practice, bringing their interests together in significant works such as *Ways of Walking: Ethnography and Practice on Foot* (Ingold & Vergunst 2008). This collection of writings explores the various ways in which researchers are using walking as a methodology for relating in and with place.

Our fast-moving pace, assisted by the mechanisation and automation of travel, is physically changing our bodies as well as shifting our ways of relating to land. The growing interest in walking within a range of disciplines, as demonstrated by academic research, coincides with a deepening awareness of the damaging impacts of *speed* and

deceptions of progress on our wellbeing. Speed informs underlying structures in the West, which have both enabled and been used to justify rapid environmental degradation and cultural domination to feed the needs of hyper-consumerism (Tuck & McKenzie 2015, Plumwood 2002). Environmental and Indigenous scholars are calling for alternative philosophies and methodologies that can challenge the colonial and capitalist mentalities which drive many of the ecological crises that are destroying our life-supporting systems (Simpson 2017).

In *Place in Research* (Tuck & McKenzie 2015), Unangax scholar Eve Tuck and Canadian environmentalist and educational theorist Marcia Makenzie lay out potential approaches and methodologies for what they term *critical place inquiry*. Advocating for mobile action in response to critical place issues within the contexts of settler colonisation, globalisation and environmental degradation, their ideas link closely with the aims and methodologies of my own creative research project. Drawing on the research of creative researchers, walking is discussed as an embodied, participatory mode of wayfinding that is being utilised as an important pedagogical and research approach, particularly for coming to know more about place (Tuck & McKenzie 2015). Mobility is also discussed as a key concept and methodology towards an ethics of decolonisation in the work of key Australian non-Indigenous place-based theorists, Deborah Bird Rose (2004), Val Plumwood (1993, 2002) and Ross Gibson (1992, 2013), all of whom have been central to my thinking.

Through the slow, repetitive and deliberate embodied action of walking daily in Knocklofty, I found myself in the deeply pleasurable experience of what I have come to articulate as knotted or non-linear entanglements of time. This embodied sensation of time has made me acutely aware of how linear time, as one example of a dominant Western structure, shapes my everyday thinking, making and interactions with place. Reinforced by Deborah Bird Rose's theories, I have come to see that a successive arrangement of moments upon a timeline can close down dialogue between past and present. As a key aim of my project, opening up dialogue with our past in the present, through acknowledgement of our shared histories, is an essential step towards a future of respectful and ethical intercultural dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia.

Through this research I have identified few creative projects exploring the role that walking can play in fostering embodied and relational dialogue, specifically within the context of settler-colonial places. This has led me to see a growing need for further



exploration and research within these intersecting fields of walking and place-based theory. As clearly expressed by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, decolonisation is only possible with the consensual relationships that come from genuine attempts to enter dialogue (Simpson 2017). Dialogue is only possible if the aim is not to *resolve*, but to learn to live with the experience and complex feelings of dis-location and discomfort which are an implicit part of walking in stolen land (Tuck & McKenzie 2015).

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This exegesis interweaves my methodologies with the theoretical threads that have come from a direct engagement with place. The reader will be led along tracks in southern Tasmania which have become familiar through a ritualised looping, and into the terrain of my creative works. The reader will find these creative works nestled among the ideas and work of other artists and theorists whose written and creative work has been critical to this research inquiry. The artists I have chosen to write about engage with questions of attachment, loss and longing through place-based practices. Their interdisciplinary approaches critically engage with the materiality of their chosen mediums and employ the use of ritual, repetition, performance and documentation. I have come to their work largely through direct and intimate engagement in the gallery.

The tone and structure of the exegesis is directly informed by the process of walking itself – the way I can simultaneously wander physical pathways in place, whilst wandering entanglements of thought. The use of a narrative voice is influenced by a number of key writers, including Ross Gibson (2012), Kim Mahood (2017), Saskia Beudel (2013) and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2013, 2017), who embed their subjective experience in rigorous research and narratives of place. I regard these communicative models as importantly speaking to the multiplicity and complexity of our embedded relations with our social and cultural matrices.

The exegesis unfolds in four chapters. Chapter One, *Balancing on a complex ground*, situates me within Australia's complex interwoven matrix of land, history and culture. It explores the fundamental importance of *place* within the project and how conceptualisations of place are shaped by individual and national desires, losses and longings. This leads to a discussion of my print collage works, *Carrying places* and *Shredded places*.

Chapter Two, *Shelter and Holdfast*, places the reader in Knocklofty Reserve, the place where I have enacted a walking methodology. Introducing the notions of *nests* and *image clusters* as theorised by Bachelard, I look at ideas of longing for lost intimacy with land. These ideas are further contextualised in relation to work by artists James Tylor and Marlene Creates and lead to a discussion of my major series of print works, *holdfast iterations*.

Chapter Three, *breathing, stepping, thinking*, explores the use of repetition and looping gestures that are central to walking and to my iterative making process. These actions enable me to simultaneously walk the tracks of my mind while in place and, in a sense, walk two *scapes* — the land and the body. I explore this in relation to my *walking breathing drawings* and my aims to shift linear time concepts.

Chapter Four, *Walking contested ground*, looks at notions of trespass and the complex process of learning to read the land when there are no longer Aboriginal protocols to guide us. This is contextualised by the work of artist Julie Gough and writer Saskia Beduel.

These chapters will lead to *Findings*, a discussion concerning how we might negotiate relationships and build restorative dialogue through our actions and art practices in places with complex settler-colonial legacies, thus leading us to potential methodologies for decolonisation. I will discuss the arrivals and departures of the project and my contribution to a growing field of research. I will discuss choices made about the installation and exhibition of the creative work and how this is informed by ideas that emerged through the project, most notably that a generative looping is ever unfolding.

## 1. Chapter One | Balancing on a complex ground

### *Recalling a Bruny Island walk, part one, February 2016*

*Conscious of a familiar anxiety seeping in concerning how to begin to communicate with, make in and speak of this place, I do all I feel comfortable to do – walk, observe and listen.*

*Step by step, breath by breath, I begin to be here.*

*I am walking alone at Cape Bruny in October 2014, along a wild stretch of sandy beach, now known as Lighthouse Bay. This is my first time on Bruny Island, an island on the eastern edge of Southern Tasmania. I have come with two other artists to spend a week reflecting, walking and making. We are staying in the disused lighthouse keeper's residence.*

*The sky is thick with cloud, occasionally breaking to let the sun illuminate patches of sand and dolerite rock. The clouds are a Payne's grey, with a touch of Prussian blue and Sumi ink – a colour I have come to know well since moving to Tasmania. The wind is bitter, cutting through my layers of clothing and stinging my warm skin. There is a Southerly storm brewing and due to roll in later in the day. I feel the exhilaration of knowing I will be experiencing the environment in its extreme.*

*As I walk along the beach, I spot middens in the dunes and pieces of ochre on the sand. This leads my mind to thinking of the generations of Nununi women who have walked this beach and dived the cold, deep rolling oceans around this island for abalone, scallops and crayfish. I look up at the steep dunes along the beach and imagine families sitting nestled in behind, protected from the Southerly winds and sharing the day's catch.*

*For the first time since beginning to walk in Tasmania, I am awoken to an awareness that I am moving in an ancient place with a long and embedded history of Aboriginal presence.*

*Following this string of thought as I walk, I find myself thinking about the layers of European settler-colonial presence: the whalers, sealers and explorers who dropped their anchors in the island's protected bays more than two hundred years ago for food, water and timber; and the British colonial transport and merchant vessels that followed – travelling the channel between Bruny and the larger island to service the growing Hobart colony.*

*Cargoes of people, livestock and provisions would have moved through this channel in increasing numbers from the time that the first boat*

*permanently anchored in the deep estuary, now known as the River Derwent, in 1803. These Europeans claimed their discoveries by naming them and recording their presence with the written word.*

*By the time Hobart was being built, the Nununi were very familiar with these encounters – Bruny Island having been visited as early as 1642.*

*These complex encounter narratives are inextricably bound with violence. The waves of European colonisation in this part of Southern Tasmania are accompanied by the suffering, displacement and dispossession of the Aboriginal clans. This place bears witness to incomprehensible cruelty and brutality. The trauma that lies in the land is deep and painful.*

*As the waves crash and the kelp gathers and rolls with the tide, I feel an immense sadness. I am acknowledging the absences and shadow spaces of where I am.*

### ***Place beginnings***

As a young child listening and playing in the red sands of Central Australia, I grew up interweaving the myths and legends of multiple cultures and I unquestioningly understood that this land was occupied by a rich array of creation characters that roamed the land, linking language groups and ancestral lands; their physical manifestations could be found in geological forms, plants, animals and sky. Among these dreaming characters were the Yipirinya Caterpillar, Rainbow Serpent, Giant Devil Dingo, and Turramulli the Giant Quinkin who devoured Kangaroos whole and was the fiercest of the bush spirits of Northern Australia. These stories were made vivid by illustrations in children's books by authors and artists such as Lardil man, Dick Roughsey (Goobalathaldin) from Mornington Island in the south-eastern Gulf of Carpentaria, and Pamela Lofts, who illustrated and compiled a series of dreamtime stories told by Indigenous storytellers from across Northern Australia in the early 1980s.

Stories of children wandering off, getting lost in the bush, and being pursued or stolen by spirits, seemed especially real when our weekends were spent out camping beyond Alice Springs on dry riverbeds. Our campfires illuminated the smooth white bark of ghost gums around the camp, sweet billy Milo was brewed on the campfire, and canvas swags were laid out for sleeping under the velvety-black, star-speckled skies.

These childhood stories guided me through the bush with their moral tales of good and evil, mixed with creation magic. As a young child, I was convinced that these creatures – especially the Rainbow Serpent with its power to create rain and water holes and Turramulli the Giant Quinkin – truly inhabited the luminous red rocky outcrops beyond our campfire. These stories seemed to heighten my awareness of the power and the danger of the bush, while also providing me with a strong sense of protection.

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I was born into a family with a strong sense of social justice and involvement in human rights advocacy – an introduction that began as a baby on my mother’s hip at the hand-back of Uluru in 1985. I was made aware that the land that my European ancestors colonised had been cared for, shaped and molded by over 500 nations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples since time immemorial; nations who intimately understood and cared for the complex ecosystems of which they were part.

I grew up knowing that I was on Aboriginal Land. I was welcome if I acknowledged and respected the appropriate protocols; where these were not known, I knew that I must walk with gentle and responsible footprints. I also moved with the understanding that I was walking amongst an ancient Aboriginal cosmology, whether I was fully cognisant of it or not, and the childhood Dreamtime stories played a role in giving me this sense.

I am the descendent of a nineteenth-century European migrant narrative – the ‘free settler’ kind. It is a story like so many others, in which my family hoped for a new start. Taking generous land grants, they fulfilled their desire to prosper financially and spiritually within the new colony. With land holdings in Queensland, Tasmania and Victoria, they were undoubtedly responsible for the displacement of Aboriginal people from their land.

As a result of this upbringing and an understanding about where my family comes from, I walk the land with an uneasy conscience. I am aware that the land, and those of us who walk it, bear witness to a complex and interwoven settler-colonial narrative of personal and cultural longings and desires, intercultural relations and tensions, and cruel and violent conflicts. However, despite my limited knowledge of the stories, I also walk the land with a very real sensation of the enfolding Aboriginal cosmology wrapping around me and locating me here in this very place. I felt this sensation most strongly as a child when my mind could still wander other-worldly pathways with ease. It has re-emerged since

walking, listening and collaborating with Aboriginal people in my adult life, in my work as an artist. These are moments that have greatly informed my thinking and desire to embed myself more intimately with where I walk.

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Standing on Cape Bruny, at the very uncertain beginning of this project, unsure of my direction and overwhelmed by the history, scale and unfamiliarity of the terrain, I am aware that I carry these important and formative place relationships. I am reassured at that moment by the knowledge and understanding I hold from these foundational experiences and I know these will assist me to navigate, to make connections, and eventually form a new place relationship with Tasmania.

My research began to take shape through the familiar process of walking and a set of core questions: How do I create dialogue with, and in, this place – a place that comprises a complex interweaving of narrative, loss and longing? What is it to be in place, to be of place? What is it to feel displaced or without place? And how do I articulate enmeshment with place when I experience simultaneous, but seemingly contradictory, feelings of attachment and displacement, and longing for both motility and fixity?

These are challenging philosophical questions that many of us, in contemporary Australia, face and attempt to address as we walk and interpret this land through our art and writing. In the process, many of us have the hope of building responsible and responsive dialogue and deeper attachment to where we are. The uneasy state of contradictory sensations that I explore in this chapter can be deeply confronting. This unease is bound up with coming to terms with the reality of settler-colonial conquest as an ongoing process. Deborah Bird Rose frames this in her key text, *Report from a Wild Country: Ethics of Decolonisation*:

Our generations alive today may be the first wave of settlers to try to grasp the enormity of conquest, and to understand it as a continuous process. In consequence, many of us really search to understand how we may inscribe back into the world a moral presence for ourselves (Rose 2004, p. 6).

Understanding how colonial processes are still operating and inhibiting our ability as a community to form and maintain place relationships and deep connectivity with Country is an important part of finding new ways of engaging ethically. To begin to understand the

matrix of conquest in Australia, we need to look at conceptualisations of place and how these have been manifested to meet the needs of the colonial project.

### *To be in place and of place*

Place theory is an important support for this inquiry. The pervasiveness and overuse of notions such as ‘sense of place’ in contemporary Australia prompted me to look at the origins of the word and concept. The work of environmental philosopher Val Plumwood, anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose and, more recently, writer and academic Ross Gibson has allowed me to come to understand that notions of place are appropriated and adapted to feed our individual and cultural desires and longings. In re-approaching place philosophy through contemporary Western place theorists – such as philosophers Edward S. Casey and Jeff Malpas who work within the tradition of phenomenology, and key Indigenous educators and scholars Eve Tuck and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson who work within critical place and decolonisation theory – I have come to understand the idea of embeddedness in place and the notion that *who we are* has much to do with *where we are*. All these thinkers and their theoretical approaches importantly advocate for experiential and relational understandings of emplacement and an understanding that place is dynamic. It is both bounded and porous and always in relation or interplay with other places. These conceptions help break down the body/place and self/other dichotomies. If we are able to understand ourselves as embedded and entangled with place, we ultimately feel part of it and therefore responsible for it. This puts us, as Malpas suggests, ‘into genuine proximity to the human, to ourselves as well as others, and so into proximity to the real ground of ethical obligation, ethical responsibility and ethical responsiveness’ (2013, p. 18). It is in this idea that the motivation for my project lies.

I am drawing on the theory and place understanding of Edward S. Casey to better understand our uses of the term ‘place’. Casey is part of a phenomenological movement to re-establish the role and importance of place within Western thinking. Contemporary Western thought, Casey argues, continues to see space and time as pre-existing and ‘universal in scope, and place as merely particular’, derivatives or apportionings of space (1999, p. 13).

Jeff Malpas clarifies the distinction between, and origins of, the terms *space* and *place* in his essay, ‘Thinking Topologically: Place, Space, and, Geography’ (2013). He illuminates

that continual failings in our understanding of the core concepts are enabling destructive distortions and misuse of them. Malpas suggests that Greek thought considers *place*, (topos or chora), to be the more elemental notion. The ‘sui generis’ concept of *space* emerged through the illumination of spatial elements within place thinking and also through the impact of the concept of *void* (kenon) (2013, p. 3). Malpas acknowledges that the concept of *space* acquired a ‘clearer and more defined character in Renaissance and Modern thought, resulting in place becoming a more obscure and less significant notion’ (2013, p. 3). The last three centuries have seen the concept of place actively neglected and suppressed, due to the pervasiveness of social and natural sciences and an increased interest and focus on time and space. Geography is one such discipline and its conception of the world has contributed to fundamental changes in the spatial relationship of human beings to their environments. Most notably, we see a separation of body from place, body from land. Ross Gibson discusses this mentality as applied to the Australian context in his book, *South of West: Postcolonialism and the Narrative Construction of Australia* (1992):

It had come to pass, therefore, that the modern mentality had a relationship with the land while a non-modern mentality might be said to be in and of the land (Gibson 1992, p. 6).

The result of this mentality in much contemporary thought, suggests Malpas, is that ‘place often appears either as a subjective overlay on the reality of materialised spatiality (place is space *plus* human value or ‘meaning’) or else as merely arbitrarily designated position within a spatial field’ (2013, p. 3). Casey extends on this when he writes:

The idea of transformation from ‘sheer physical terrain’ and the making of ‘existential space’ – which is to say, place – out of a ‘blank environment’ entails that to begin with there is some empty and innocent spatial spread, waiting as it were, for cultural configurations to render it placeful (Casey 1999, p. 14).

Within an Australian settler-colonial context, this modernist thinking has allowed space to dominate our conceptions of land and become *other* to the human. This not only denies the human an embedded relationship, but also denies the agency of land as a pre-existing place. It enables us to see the land as a space – homogenous, uniform, measurable, quantifiable and expandable. To see land in this way gave permission for the British imperial powers to justify the appropriation and apprehension of land based on the notion of its being empty or *terra nullius*.



Reflecting on the settler mentality further, Gibson writes:

The settlers brought with them an attitude about the otherness of 'empty' space. They arrived on the coastline and looked inland. Behind them, distantly, was safety and truth, because behind them was the world that their civilization had ranged over and written over (Gibson 1992, p. 9).

Casey and Malpas follow in the tradition of ancient and post-modern Western thinkers, from Archytas and Aristotle to Heidegger and Bachelard, in considering place as 'the first of all things' (Casey 1999, p. 16). Phenomenological approaches suggest places have their own 'essential structures and modes of experience', which we can sense if we are open to them and attentive to our direct embodied experience. We are not merely in a place, but of a place, and our perceptual bodies reflect the places we inhabit (p. 19).

Care must be taken not to simply overlay this Western thinking onto Indigenous ontologies. It is significant, however, that many of the core understandings presented by Casey and Malpas align closely with an Aboriginal conception of Country. Place or Country itself is prior or central to being – 'this ground itself is a coherent collocation of pre-given places – pre-given at once in his experience and in the Dreaming that sanctions this experience' (Casey 1999, p. 15). Place or Country is seen not merely as the product of 'space' having been inscribed with the particularities of history and culture. The environment is not an empty medium, culturalised and made into 'Country' through human use and the practice and reproduction of social actions. Place and Country have always been.

To conceptualise place as a cultural transformation in these terms disregards the land and the agency of the more-than-human world, including, for Aboriginal peoples, the world of the creation ancestors, who brought the land into being. Val Plumwood articulates this understanding in her chapter, 'Towards a materialist spirituality of place' in her work *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (2002). Using the words and concepts of Aboriginal philosopher Bill Neidjie, Plumwood suggests that the world around human life is never considered background, but foreground, as 'a giver of meaning, a communicative source to be read as a book' (p. 226). Bill Neidji writes, 'Our story is in the land: it is written in those sacred places; my children will look after those places, that's the law' (cited in Plumwood 2002, p. 226).

Sympathetic to this Indigenous concept of land, Casey speaks here of the matrix of place:

Place ushers us into what already is: namely the envining subsoil of our embodiment, the bedrock of our being-in-the-world. If imagination projects us out beyond ourselves while memory takes us back behind ourselves, place subtends and enfolds us, lying perpetually under and around us (1993, p. xvii).

As Casey suggests, if we understand place as subtending and enfolding us, we experience ourselves as already embedded or part of place. Whether we are linked to the ancestral spirits that have guided the oldest living culture since time immemorial, or we are linked to a story of arrival by way of a settler-colonial or migrant narrative, we are entangled in relations with others and with place and therefore responsible for it. American psychiatrist Harold Kaplan powerfully states:

I become an agent and not a power instrument, when I understand that my existence is entangled with others' lives and is, therefore, responsible' (cited in Rose 2004, p. 13).

### ***Place panic***

'Place', Casey writes, has the 'power to direct and stabilise us, to memorialise and identify us, to tell us who and what we are in terms of *where we are* (as well as *where we are not*)' (1993, p. xi). One of the ways I have found it possible to contemplate the power of place and our embeddedness with certain places has been to contemplate what it might be to have no place, or what it is to experience displacement. This questioning has been triggered by my own movement from Canberra to Tasmania to undertake this project, and experiencing a form of place separation, which resulted in great anxiety about *where I was* and *where I was not*.

Casey suggests that, 'Even when we are displaced, we continue to count upon *some* reliable place, if not our present precarious perch then a place-to-come or a place-that-was' (1993, p. ix). Casey explores the notion of 'place panic', a state we find ourselves in if confronted by the possibility of being without place – there being no place to be or to go. This feeling of estrangement, when we are out of place, Casey links to the Greek term *atopos*, literally meaning 'no place'.

Casey proposes that having 'no place' is felt most strongly when it is a forced state (for example, through separation, displacement and exile as the result of conflict, migration or

environmental disaster), and comments that we can experience symptoms of depression, disorientation, desolation in this state. Each of these feelings can encompass a sense of intolerable emptiness (1993, p. x).

The separation from place, and subsequent sense of emptiness, provides the impulse behind our continual instinctive drive to re-find place. Casey suggests that from our first experience of separation anxiety before two years of age, we continue to suffer throughout life from a series of place separations (1993). For many of us, who no longer reside in the place we first felt connected (the place of our birth and childhood memories), we have a continual desire to return to this place physically, in memory or imagination.

When I arrived in Tasmania to undertake a project considering my connection to land and to ask questions about how I might enact ethical dialogue with where I find myself, I instantly felt without place or in a form of 'place panic'. I had located my practice so strongly in Canberra, where I had spent all of my adult life and where I had developed my visual language. Being confronted by an unknown environment, climate, studio space, walking routes and relationships, left me feeling panicked about how to even begin a relationship, let alone have a dialogue, with this unfamiliar location.

I found myself longing in a way that I had not before for the blue Brindabella mountains, the granite outcrops of the Scabby Range, the dry sclerophyll forest and familiar weather patterns of Canberra. I organised regular trips back to spend time in the bush, around familiar people and in familiar studios. I organised to have a residency at the Australian National University, where I had done my undergraduate degree nearly ten years before, in order to print from the plates that held the information from past place relationships.

I think about this now and realise that I was searching for the familiar: connection, stability and security in my past, while I began searching for a new and appropriate methodology and visual language to begin my project in Tasmania. Having to re-establish roots and establish new connections in order to function and begin to interpret where I am has further enabled me to empathise with the very embodied sensation of place separation and, perhaps, as Casey describes, a form of 'place panic'.

This experience sensitised me in a new way to the many, often terribly traumatic, examples around me of place separation. While thinking about my own negotiation with where I was

during the early stages of the project, I was also reading about Tasmania's settler-colonial history and talking with a Tasmanian Aboriginal friend about the devastating effects of displacement from ancestral lands and the resulting loss in cultural and spiritual practices and language. Considering my own sense of embodied separation in relation to the dispossession and displacement experienced by Aboriginal people, I felt overwhelming sadness. I tried to imagine the sense of loss, desperation and fear felt when forcibly removed from Country through the dispersal and assimilation policies of colonial settlement, or the intergenerational pain felt by communities now, who are rebuilding their culture and, in many cases, are still unable to access their Country.

I also began to sense the enormity of the separation and isolation experienced by early convicts and settlers who arrived in this strange and foreign land, often against their will and with no prospect of return to their homelands. My thoughts turned to the experiences of refugees today, fleeing persecution and arriving here to hostility. And as I write this, I am watching in the media the unfolding mass displacement of Syrians, fleeing persecution, walking across great tracts of land and across borders to seek asylum, as their homes are reduced to piles of rubble.

My position, as a contemporary settler Australian, privileged and fortunate, does not compare to the scale of loss and separation of these experiences. I cannot easily imagine the experience of involuntary place separation. However, what I have come to recognise is that separation is an experience familiar to all of us, and that displacement is part of the narratives that lie within the matrix of this very place. My own experience is a valuable part of beginning to consider and empathise with the lived experiences of many people with whom my life and art is entangled.

### ***Where we are***

The questions about *where are we* and *how we situate ourselves* are part of a much larger discussion around Australian placedness, including the geographical positioning of our landmass and culture, the master narratives of exploration and encounter, and globalisation. Writers such as Ross Gibson (1992), Paul Carter (1996), Peter Read (1996), Deborah Bird Rose (2004), Val Plumwood (2002), Miwon Kwon (2002) and Bruce Pascoe (2007) have entered these discussions in a number of key texts.

Floating in a state of uncertainty about where ‘home’ is and holding seemingly contradictory feelings of fluidity and fixity is how I would describe the contemporary settler descendant state. This is articulated beautifully by Australian artist Fiona Hall when she says:

The place I come from is, I think, located somewhere on the ebb tide of the world at large, a place in a culture in a continual state of flux, drifting without an anchor (Hall 2010, p. 20).

This sentiment is explored further in Ross Gibson’s 2013 essay, ‘Motility’, on the work of Australian artist, Simryn Gill. Malaysian-born, Gill’s interdisciplinary art practice, amongst other things, performs a subtle interrogation and critique of the narrow place-focused debates in Australia from the position of a migrant experience. Gill’s work explores what it is to straddle two cultures and experience place narratives that alienate and deny the fluidity and multiplicity within our society.

Gill’s work brings a revelation to the place-anchored debates about Australian experience. She suggests, implicitly and enigmatically rather than explicitly or simply, that to be Australian might have less to do with being in a place than it has to do with being in temporal patterns of movement, being in rhythms of gleaming realisation, being in glimpsed insights and occluding befuddlements, in a continual process of reorientation, action and reaction. Gill helps us sense how being Australian might actually mean being untethered or placeless (Gibson 2013, p. 260).

From the nation’s British settler-colonial origins, whereby land was appropriated and established as new and improved replicas of the societies left behind (Banivanua-Mar & Edmonds 2010), the preoccupation with land acquisition and ownership has been central to our society’s approach to seeking rootedness, belonging and ‘sense of place’. This, I would argue, is still central to much of our current thinking. Without critically questioning, we can easily find ourselves associating our *sense of place* linked with a desire to identify with, own and apprehend a ‘bounded plot(s) of country’ (Gibson 2013, p. 259). Artists like Gill are challenging these notions through examining their own cultural place separation or dis-placement, not from the position of a victim of colonisation or globalisation, but as a *situation* that enables them to search out new ways of moving *through* place – sometimes tenuously and longingly anchored and at other times floating completely unattached.

Environmental philosopher Val Plumwood further discusses the different frameworks for ownership of land – differences, she suggests, that ‘can be so radical that they amount to different paradigms of land relationship, incomprehensible to those from a different

framework' (2002, p. 229). Plumwood discusses the main differences between productivist and human-centred paradigms, in which human labour validates claims to own the land, as opposed to forms of communal and communicative or 'two-way' and 'two-place' frameworks, in which you belong to the land as much as it belongs to you. Fundamentally, the human-centred or Lockean position, she suggests, validates 'capitalist and colonial models of appropriation and ownership' – a system that is one-way and monological (p. 229). Land is viewed as a resource for human use; its agency and independence are denied. These commodity models, Plumwood powerfully states, reflect 'back to us only the echo of our own desires' (p. 230).

Our conditioned desire for, and assertion of, the importance of 'home-places' or 'native plots of place' presents a continual dilemma for those of us with settler or migrant narratives – 'stories not of arising but of *arriving*', as Ross Gibson identifies them (2013, p. 261). We find ourselves unable to claim a deep ancestral or spiritual linkage to this land. Attachment to the idea of home-places can ultimately inhibit our ability to form connection to place by preventing us from feeling legitimate in our claims to a connection to where we are, and from recognising the importance and strength found in concepts of fluidity and multiplicity in our place relationships.

Not thinking through multiplicity can be dangerous, as we can see in the heightened nationalist claims to place, by those who identify with a native-born entitlement to a home-place in non-Aboriginal ways. This assertion of Australian 'place pride' has resulted in racist aggression and assimilationist attitudes towards recent migrants and people seeking asylum, despite the promoters of such attitudes having their own 'arrival' narratives. While not denying the importance of developing individual attachment to places, Plumwood also speaks of the problematic personal, quasi-religious feelings and rituals that individuals develop (and, I would add, *appropriate*) in order to answer their uneasiness in feeling without a home-place (2002, pp. 231-232). Deborah Bird Rose raises the point that a lack of place connection, so common in New World settler societies, can mean that we 'escape feedback from the place' and therefore continue to perform actions counter to responsibility, resulting in further colonising behaviours (2004, p. 5).

In reciprocal or communicative models, Plumwood reiterates, the entire land of habitation, with its multiple links to the many other places of sustaining relationships, is filled with meaning, not just a few revered, exceptional pieces of land (2002, p. 230). In his book *The*

*Lie of the Land* (1996), writer Paul Carter's suggests, that we should challenge ourselves 'to learn to dissolve the emotionally-catatonic and historically-destructive opposition between mobility and stability – with its confrontationalist vocabulary of special places and inviolable boundaries' (1996, p. 5). He, like many, advocates for a shift towards notions of movement and multiplicity in our relationships to land, in which we would move from a model of preferencing special or home-place attachments to looking at how places are porous and intimately linked with other places as part of a complex web of relation.

This idea of porosity and relation is explicit in Jeff Malpas' interpretation of place:

No place exists except in relation to other places, and every place contains other places that are related within it. The distinctive character of places is thus something that emerges through the interplay of places rather than their absolute separation (which is impossible) (Malpas 2013, p. 4).

With this relational thinking comes the idea of heterogeneity within place – 'places contain difference within them, as well as being differentiated from other places' (Malpas 2013, p. 4).

In the Australian context, Gibson suggests that, in our quest for 'placedness' in 'native plots of place', we continually deny the fluidity and relational dynamics that pre-exist within this land. Fluidity is an inherent aspect of Australian Aboriginal culture – an aspect that 'has proven so complex and all-encompassing that it has persistently flummoxed many presumptions of settler Australia' (Gibson 2013, p. 259). Aboriginal people have thrived in some of the most extreme environments through a deep and evolved understanding of the complex ecosystems of which they are a part, and which are part of a web or rhizome-like system of linkages to other communities and essential life sustaining resources.

Fluidity is an inherent aspect of a growing migrant nation. Our rich and vibrant society is a mass of entangled narratives from every part of the world. Gibson suggests that it is pointless to reiterate the idea and goal of 'settlement' as a truthful image or aspiration for our settler-colonial and globalised nation (2013, p. 260).

I would reiterate that fluidity is not just inherent to our nation but is fundamental to human beings and our survival. 'We are beings of the between', states Casey, 'always on the move between places' (1993, p. xii). Casey identifies the universal need for movement for

the enhancement of survival; our physical and cultural appetite is dependent on moving between multiple places and multiple relationships.

We want a sense of connection, rootedness or stability, and yet these ideas are contradictory to aspects of our very human being. Those of us who are part of the mass global movement of the past four hundred years are losing connection to those ‘native plots of place’, while also finding ourselves in the midst of the contested grounds of settler colonisation. Here, we find the need for a renewed sense of fluidity in our thinking about place relationships.

### *Carrying places*

This questioning of the inherent need to identify with place led me, in the early stages of the project, to think about the mnemonic devices we carry with us when we move to a new place – the journals, photographs, drawings and objects we gather and carry with us as catalysts to an internalised and embodied memory of place. These things have the power to re-connect us to our old place relationships as we encounter the new. These triggers for sensation and closeness to where we have come from are an important part of building a new place relationship: they create a connecting and dialogical string or line between these points or places, giving meaning and offering continuity from one to the other. I found it was in these items that I could feel more stable whilst getting my bearings, floating in an uneasy state of the unknown and between-ness.

The first set of work I developed for the project came directly from this idea of multiplicity, fluidity and a consequent search to situate or place myself within my new surroundings. This series of works I have called *Carrying places* (Figs. 1 and 2).

When I moved to Tasmania, I brought with me accumulations of loose sketches, and rolls and rolls of artist proofs – woodcuts, etchings and monotypes. These prints and sketches held the marks that formed images and memories of past place encounters and relationships, and I held onto them tightly in an attempt to ground myself in my new state of flux.

I began collating, cutting and collaging the images into new pieces and arrangements, selecting specific sections for their quality of form, mark or mnemonic strength. The process of remembering places as I selected, cut and re-arranged became a form of catharsis. I would spend time recalling when, where and how I made each print or



drawing, and many of these moments were bound up in deeply felt relationships with specific places and people. Unsure why or what I was aiming to achieve, and feeling like I should be *out there* discovering and encountering my new environment, I somewhat reluctantly followed my instincts to engage with this intimate process of working with my archive. I found this exercise highly addictive and, after several hours of fine cutting and rearranging, I would be in a deeply relaxed state. From being in a state of potential ‘place panic’, the selecting and reworking of these images brought a sense of purpose and also invited a new language and making process into my practice. I had never revisited and reworked images before, having an approach to making whereby I would develop a drawing or print in a single session (sometimes several months long) only to print it once or a half a dozen times and then move on. Rarely would I rework a print or drawing, instead choosing to move on to the next work.



Fig. 1 Antonia Aitken, *Carrying places 3*, 2014–2015, collaged prints, 39 x 59 cm

This invitation for the past works to interact or assist in the building of a new image by layering and reconfiguring coincided with a shift in my thinking about place relationships. As I have explored in this chapter, I have always had a confused sense of wanting to feel placed.

I am aware that I walk land that holds sacred stories to which I will never be privy, as well as holding layers of colonial violence in which my ancestors were complicit and to which I

now bear witness. I have also always felt conflicted by the seemingly contradictory desire to embed myself in the land and yet always to be on the move. These are aspects of myself that I am learning are both innately part of being born here in this very place and time. As I have discussed, it is possible to be both embedded without a 'native plot of place', and also be in fluid movement, as this acknowledges the porous and relational aspects of place.

This shift in thinking was facilitated by beginning to walk the land where I was. I walked through the streets of Hobart, on my way to University or to simply orientate myself with the city. I also began daily walks from my place of dwelling into Knocklofty Reserve, and I walked on Bruny Island. As I moved across the terrain and as I read new material, I found myself thinking more and more about the complex interweaving of lives and narratives that crisscrossed where I was. The ghosts of past and present relations were evident in the well-worn tracks and desire lines that have woven corridors of passage across the city, along the rivulets that join the mountain to the sea. I also began to think about boundaries and borders and realised that my movements between inside and outside, urban and bush, private and public had begun blurring. I realised that each of these drawn and physical demarcations that I found on maps and in person could be shifted by simply walking over, through and around them, dissolving them as I went.

This was also happening in my work. Each collaged piece would shift meaning and association every time I placed it in conjunction with another piece. By layering, concealing and revealing, I was blurring, blending and merging places. For example, my etched bodily markings from a walking drawing that records the steps taken between Rendezvous Creek and Gudgenby Cottage in 2006, became a ground for a woodcut of Murrumbidgee river rocks to sit upon (Fig. 2); the woodcut of Casuarina trees from the aftermath of the 2010 floods in the Canberra water catchment became an entangled holdfast that I collected and sketched whilst walking on Lighthouse Beach, on Bruny Island in 2014 (Fig. 1).

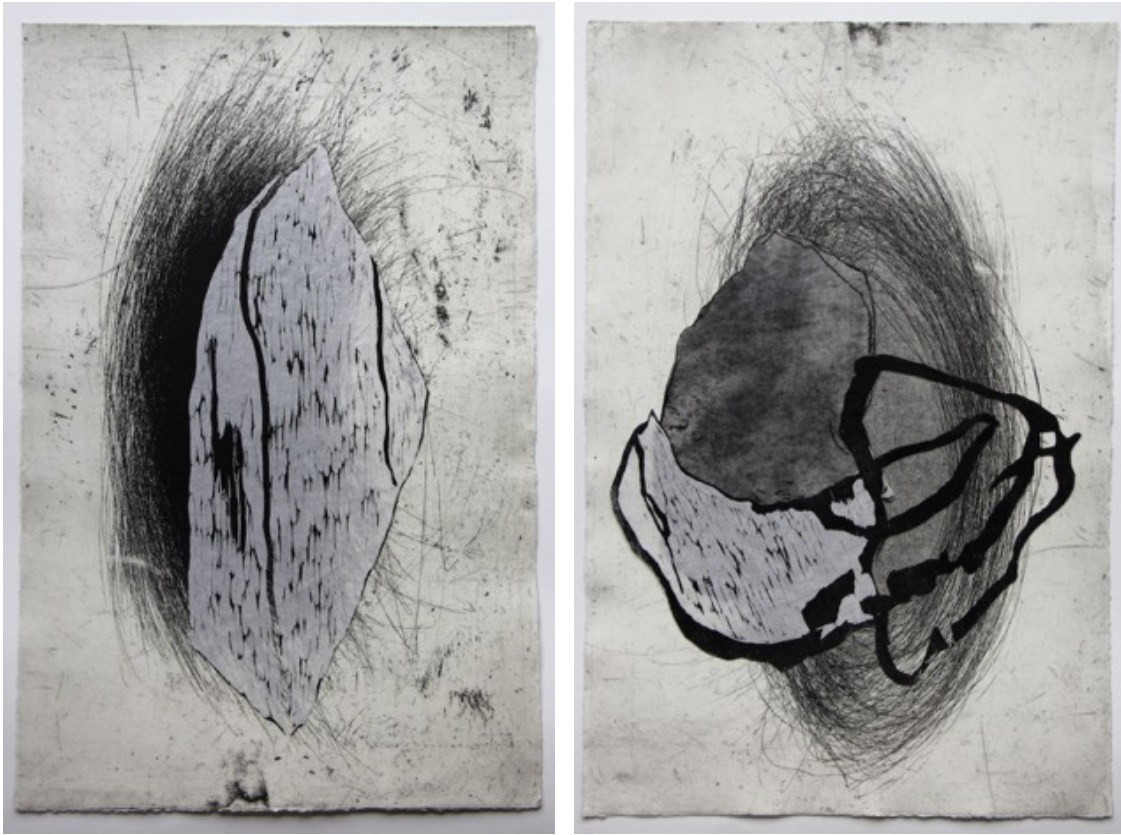


Fig. 2 Antonia Aitken, *Carrying places 1 & 2*, 2014–2015, collaged prints, each approx. 59 x 39 cm

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In his essay, ‘Making to Place: In the Artist’s Words, Refracted’ (2013), Brian Massumi eloquently discusses the *procedural* practices of Simryn Gill. As previously discussed in this chapter, Gill’s work operates in opposition to much place-based discussion in Australia. She is less preoccupied with grounding and emplacing herself within the complex matrix of this land than with floating in the gap between place relationships – a quality Massumi attributes to her migrant situation.

Gill’s practice engages the action of collecting, and the assemblage or arrangement of these *things*. Whilst we think of collecting as an action of accumulating memory and enduring traces of a specific time and place (Massumi 2013), as I have discussed in relation to my own practice, Gill’s acts of collecting often challenge this very idea. In her series of works *Pressing in* (2016), Gill developed a series of relief prints imprinted from the surfaces of collected drift wood which she had found beached upon the shore of Port Dickson on the Strait of Malacca. In her studio in Port Dickson, Gill collaborated with Australian printmaker Trent Walter to hand-print over 160 arrangements of the timber onto various collected ledgers, log books and shipping charts. Each piece of drift wood holds



an unknown history of use and place relation; rubbed back to life through the printing process.



Fig. 4 Simryn Gill, *Pressing in*, 2016 (in-process shots).

When first shown in her exhibition titled 'Sweet Chariot' at Griffith University Art Gallery in 2016, the prints were positioned with a series of photographs taken by Gill whilst aboard a fishing boat in the Strait of Malacca (Larsson, 2016). Presented in relation to the prints, these black and white photographs situate the artist and viewer floating out at sea. Gill never explicitly articulates the meanings of her work; rather, she leaves the viewer to build their own meaning through association. For me, these floating objects haunt the viewer with a peculiar sense of longing. Floating without anchors, placed in unconnected grounds, these once-connected forms suggest the idea of fluid attachment and a strange attempt to examine and perhaps re-locate the displaced.



Fig. 5 (left) Simryn Gill, *Pressing in*, 2016 (installation shot); Fig. 6 (right) Simryn Gill, *Sweet Chariot No. 8*, 2015, gelatin silver photograph.

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In order to better communicate a sense of shifting and blurring of time and place, I developed *Carrying places* into an animation. Through a series of slow merging slides the collage pieces shift and move around the frame, appearing and disappearing in nest-like formations.

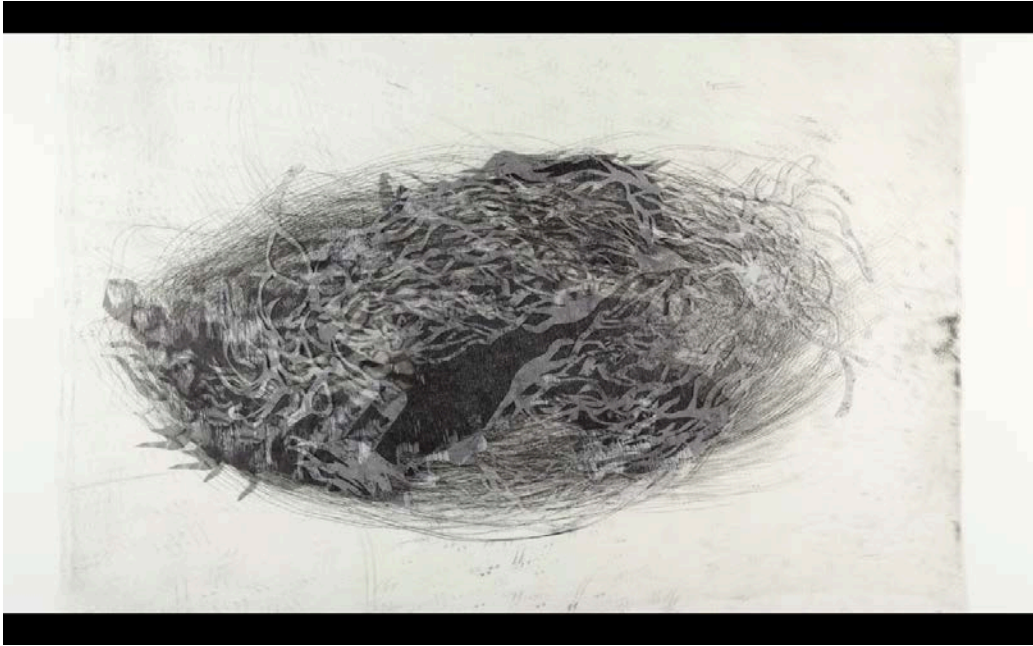


Fig. 7 Antonia Aitken, *Carrying places*, 2018, HD Video, dimensions variable.

This exploration of a merging of places also led to a series of shredded paper works titled *Shredded places*. Made as an act of catharsis, they were a letting go of my attachment to the mnemonic devices I had so carefully carried with me to Hobart. I took individual prints representative of different places and hand cut them into fine shreds. The final forms no longer *depict* the places they are made, but rather hold the places in the entanglements of printed marks.

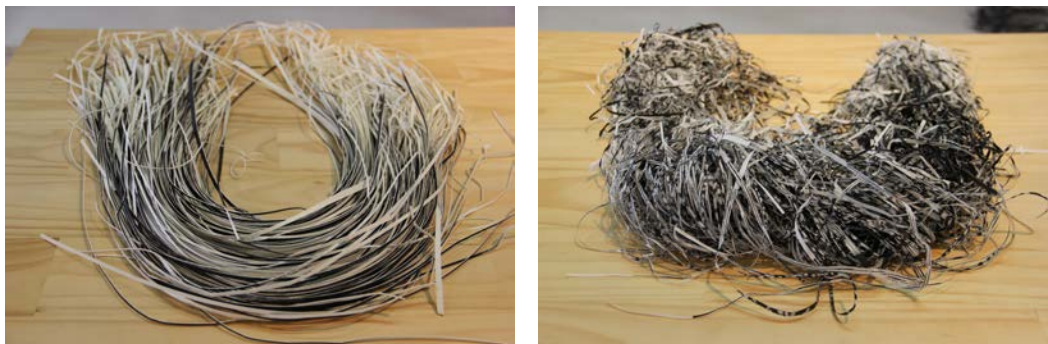


Fig. 8 Antonia Aitken, *Shredded places 1: Namadgi*, (2009); *Shredded places 2: Murrumbidgee* (2011), 2014–2015, hand-shredded prints, dimensions variable.



*Carrying places* and *Shredded places* are both early experiments that document my slow and tentative footsteps into Tasmania and are part of an important process of moving beyond 'place panic'. They are, in a way, my first attempts to explore ideas of fluid attachment, something Gill's work so beautifully contemplates.



Fig. 9 Antonia Aitken, *Shredded places* (install shot) 2016, hand-shredded prints, dimensions variable.

## ***Recalling a Bruny Island walk, part two***

*As I walk back along the beach, I think of the Aboriginal women now with their fighting voices and their open hearts. Women who are reclaiming cultural practices, standing strong for justice and generously prepared to share their care and love for country despite these histories.*

*I notice a dark red-brown form. A twisted root ball. Hundreds of intertwining strands or threads bound together in a form that looks like a human heart or lung.*

*This strange sinuous organism is the first thing I draw on Bruny Island and has since become the central form in my material and conceptual explorations for the project. Working in the way I am familiar, I choose not to know what it is or what it belongs to for a long time. I choose to remain ignorant to its classification and place within a larger ecology or its culturally bound meaning – I just allow myself to draw, touch and experience this form. Later, as people see the drawings and paper cuts, I learn it belongs to the giant kelp and that it is in fact the holdfast, or the root-like anchor or connection point of the significant Southern Ocean sea giant.*

*I sit with this knowledge for some time before I do anything with it. I know that the kelp has important cultural significance for the Tasmanian Aboriginal people. I am also aware that it is under great environmental threat due to warming seas caused by climate change.*

*This form begins to have a profound impact on my thinking and making approach.*

*The twisting, twirling, entangling roots begin speaking to my ideas of fluid and entangled relationships. Working in an intuitive and gentle observational manner I keep making iterations of the form – ink drawings on paper, collages, paper cuts and woodcuts. I am never quite sure where I am going – the process itself is fraught with uncertainty and follows speculative hunches.*

*Entanglements, nests, webs have begun to creep into my work over the last few years – coming from a search for forms and images to talk about the complexity of what I experience whilst walking in this place.*

## 2. Chapter Two | Shelter and Holdfast

*The holdfast binds the giant kelp (Macrocystis pyrifera) to rock, by sending root-like (haptera) lines of connection. The holdfast can provide essential sanctuary for close to one hundred species of invertebrates living in and on the holdfast at any time. They take shelter from the harsh Southern Ocean environment in between and inside the holdfasts tunnels and chambers – chambers created by a small isopod crustacean (Limnoria) who consumes the kelp tissue. Once dislodged from its rock substrate, the holdfast becomes a floating life raft, drifting with the ocean currents, until eventually beaching upon a shore. (About Antarctica: Kelp 2016).*

I returned to Hobart after my walk on Bruny Island with a much stronger sense of Tasmania's encounter histories. This was facilitated by my direct engagement with this contested site and supported by my reading of a number of written histories exploring the complex early intercultural negotiations and conflicts that fuelled the Black War. *Community of Thieves* (1992) by Casandra Pybus is one of these accounts; it came about through her discovery of direct family connections to Bruny Island.

The initial drawings of the holdfast that I developed on Cape Bruny began to inform a series of visual experiments in drawing, printmaking and my newly learned skills in 3D-fabrication. The holdfast spoke to notions of entanglements, attachment and fluid relations. I was able to link the form to key questions that I was considering in regard to how we situate ourselves within the violent encounter narratives in which we are intimately entangled, and how we dissolve counterproductive notions of fixity within the fluid dynamics that are at the core of this place. As I was exploring the holdfast in my studio, I also began the familiar process of daily walks out my front door and into my immediate surrounds to orientate myself and ease my heightened sense of place panic. These two simultaneous actions or ways of finding meaning and connection established the methodology of the project.

### ***Walking loops and creating desire lines***

Over the past decade I have employed walking as a starting point for my creative research practice. Walking my immediate locality – the commons, suburban footpaths and fringing reserves or bushlands – has become central to my life and art practice. Walking provides a way of calming a fearful sense of uncertainty when I encounter unfamiliar terrain. By stepping out the front door and into the proximate environment to seek my creative



response, I am *moving* into relation with the place. It is a way of engaging in an intimate and tactile dialogue with the environment, including with its non-human inhabitants. These daily walks allow me to be simultaneously quiet and to open my mind through slow movement along looped pathways. The action of walking out the front door and into my surrounding environment on a daily basis acts as a process of orientation; a physical mapping. I am spinning a web of contact between my domestic dwelling and the world beyond.

The daily walk is one of ritual and pattern, often taking thirty minutes to two hours. It requires little preparation or provision: a bottle of water, a piece of fruit, a camera, sound recorder or drawing book. Most often I do not require a physical map, as the walk is short enough (within a six-kilometre radius of the house) to confidently navigate through mind-mapping the physical markers as I walk. These looped walks are gentle meanders with the sole purpose of observation and letting the body familiarise itself with the terrain through embodied sensation. It is a wayfinding exercise, led by curiosity and impromptu directional decisions as I move. Tim Ingold writes that *wayfinding*, as opposed to map reading, can be understood as:

a skilled performance in which the traveler, whose powers of perception and action have been fine-tuned through previous experience, 'feels his way' towards his goal, continually adjusting his movements in response to an ongoing perceptual monitoring of his surroundings (Ingold 2000, p. 220).

When I began these daily meanderings in Hobart after moving from Canberra, I found myself habitually walking out the red wooden door of our Swan Street house and heading Northwestward, along the back streets of North Hobart and up to Mt Stuart. These tracks led me closer and closer to *kunanyi* / Mount Wellington. Each day I walked, I found myself closer to the mountain flanks, in the blurry zone between suburb and bush, on the urban fringe. These urban reserves are familiar places, sites where, like many Australian children, I spent much of my spare time making stick cubbies, collecting plants for magic potions and letting my imagination wander. As a child, these places stimulated a feeling of excitement and fear, of being on the edge of the wild bush. I was outside the boundaries of the home fence, but close enough that I could run back to safety. In these places I was free to roam away from adult eyes and opinions and to let my curiosity venture. They have continued to play an important role in my daily life, which I now use to rest from the noise

of daily communal life, to process my thinking, and to contemplate and generate new ideas.

### ***Knocklofty: the place I walk***

The first ridge of fringing bush that I came across, to the North-West of my Swan Street house, is a place now known as Knocklofty Reserve. It is a hill that rises steeply from the River Derwent flats. Knocklofty is a corridor to *kunanyi* and the beginning of a stretch of mountainous terrain that reaches hundreds of kilometres into the South-West of Tasmania. The area has an ancient geological history. Scatterings of fossilised plants and shellfish are reminders of a time when the area was a flourishing lake with a bed of sand and silt (Cook 2012).

This land is part of *nipaluna* country.<sup>1</sup> Before Hobart was established, this hill was once an ideal hillside for grazing native animals and an important hunting ground for the Muwinina people (Evans and Evans 2015). The location provides extended views of surrounding country – East to the river, South-West to *kunanyi* / Mount Wellington, and North to the Midlands, and with rock shelters to escape the wild Westerly weather.

We no longer know this place's Indigenous ancestral name. Its current name means 'lofty hill', and originates from the Gaelic word *cnoc*, meaning hill, and *lofty*, meaning high. It was named by a Scottish settler and is a common example of early European colonial describing and overwriting practices, which often failed to acknowledge existing Aboriginal place names, let alone learn or record these names.

Walking with a friend and fellow student (a Punnilerpanner woman from North-West Tasmania) on *kunanyi* / Mount Wellington during the early stages of my project, I was made starkly aware of the absence, not only of a name for this place, but of living descendants of the Muwinina people, the land's original custodians.

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<sup>1</sup> *nipaluna* is the *palawa kani* word for the country around Hobart. There are current discussions between the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre and the Hobart City Council as to whether to formally adopt the dual name of *nipaluna* / City of Hobart.

***Extract from ‘two women walk’, 2015***

*We walk the Mountain with caution. With respect for its power. We ask its permission to enter and thank it when we leave. We thank it for having us and for keeping us safe.*

*This mountain holds deep presences and absences.*

*Brightness and darkness.*

*Clearings and hollows.*

*Sounds and silences.*

*The conversation meanders, skips, jumps, as we traverse the rocky scree fields.*

*Our bodies rub against the rough scrub and with hands out we feel our way through the high open bog lands.*

*We eat some bush food. A ripe ‘bush tomato’. ‘Tart’ we describe it, pulling our lips tight.*

*I ask about the Aboriginal oral histories of this place. What stories remain of its spiritual and cultural meanings? She is not sure and tells me quietly that there are no living descendants of the Muwinina people to share this knowledge.*

*We walk in silence for a moment, held by this absence.*

With colonisation in the early 1800s came extensive timber harvesting, sandstone quarrying, grazing of cattle and brick making on Knocklofty (Evans and Evans 2015). To the settlers, Knocklofty was known colloquially as ‘woodcutter’s hill’. Whilst supporting the growing colony of Van Diemen’s Land, these activities throughout the region alienated and displaced Aboriginal people from their land. Access was restricted through the appropriation of land for the colony’s needs, and later granted or sold as private landholdings to new settlers. This colonising process happened throughout the region, fuelling much conflict between the settlers and Aboriginal communities. In fact, the hostilities became so violent that it ‘culminated in Governor George Arthur issuing a series

of proclamations placing the colony under martial law and calling for Aborigines to be expelled by force from the settled districts' (Lehman 2013, para. 13)<sup>1</sup>.

Owned and sold by a number of people from 1827, Knocklofty remained in private hands until in the early 1940s, when the Hobart City Council purchased much of the area for a leisure reserve under the 'protected areas' classification (Evans and Evans 2015, p. 9). Sixty years later, the bush is vigorously growing back under the care of the Council and members of Knocklofty Bush Care. The group, made up of enthusiastic locals, meets weekly to pull out gorse and other weeds, with the purpose of regenerating and caring for its diverse ecology.

People in the surrounding suburbs talk of their fondness for this area of bush. Many remember playing as children in the rock shelters, quarries and frog ponds, just as I engaged with my own nearby reserve. Today, it is a place busy with meandering bushwalkers, sweaty trail runners, and daily dog walkers. It is also home to some itinerant dwellers.

The long history of this place, and the way that it has been used, is pressed and scarred into the land, making it a complex terrain. These layers of relation have gradually been exposed as I have walked. Knocklofty has become somewhere for me to explore entanglements of image and thought, weaving and knotting these threads together by the action of moving through its networks of pathways. It has become an important place to explore broader questions of what a walking-based methodology might be, and how this methodology could address some of the philosophical and political questions about how we encounter these layered and contested places. Knocklofty has not so much been a place to be explicitly described or represented through my work, but instead a thinking place, part of a network of places that weave together my growing understanding of Tasmania, my research inquiry and my making practice. I have, however, over the years drawn on particular occurrences and visual forms found in Knocklofty. Perhaps the most significant of these is the 'shelter'.

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<sup>1</sup> The Black War is considered by historians to have begun in the 1820s as the result of an acceleration of violence between settlers and Aboriginal people coinciding with rapid expansion of settlement particularly North of Hobart and the river valleys and South of Launceston into the prime grazing lands for both communities. Over a 30-year period, 90 per cent of the Aboriginal population died as a result of the conflict and illness; those who survived were exiled to Finders Island after negotiations with George Augustus Robinson (Reynolds 2012, pp. 47-67).

## *Shelter – the nest-house – desire for lost intimacy*

### ***Walking Journal extract, 23.3.15, Knocklofty Reserve***

*I found another dwelling today, beautifully nestled into the end of a fallen tree with rocks to create a protective foundation and sticks balanced on top to create the shelter. It is a strange feeling when I find these dwellings – like I am walking into someone's bedroom.*



Fig. 10 Antonia Aitken, Knocklofty shelter, digital photographs, documented 2015, dimensions variable.

Whilst walking in Knocklofty, I came across a number of makeshift shelters, temporary dwellings constructed from the land and formed in reference to the body they shield. They were put together through a process of gathering, layering, interlacing and balancing vegetation into forms. Some were evidently in use, others more playful constructions. Some were carefully and complexly constructed using existing tree trunks and rock walls, some had A-frame rooves, soft plant bedding and multiple entrances. I documented them through drawing and digital photography. These forms have led me to contemplate our human instinct to nestle and shelter the body within the land, to gather the bush around the body like a bird – in a sense, returning the body to something simpler and hand-constructed, and closer to the non-human world.

The images and questions that were raised by the physical shelters – particularly regarding our desires for lost intimacy with land and nostalgic longing for home – were revealing the importance of these conceptual strands within the investigation.

In his chapter on ‘nests’ in *The Poetics of Space* (2014), philosopher Gaston Bachelard explores how the image of the *nest*, as with other images of animal shelters, evokes what he characterises as ‘*primal images*’. Nests provide images of withdrawal, rest and quiet in the body; movements, he suggests, that give us great physical pleasure.

Physically, the creature endowed with a sense of refuge huddles up to itself, takes to cover, hides away, lies snug and concealed. If we were to look among the wealth of our vocabulary for verbs that express the dynamics of retreat, we should find images based on animal movements of withdrawal, movements that are engraved in our muscles (Bachelard 2014, p. 112).

The Knocklofty shelters express a deep human longing to me. A longing to *return* – an innate desire experienced by many of us to re-find closeness to some original state, to wrap the land around us and sit or lie quietly within it. As I encountered more of them, I felt that one of my philosophical motivations for wandering the looped pathways of Knocklofty was being reflected in these nest-like forms.

As a child, I made similar shelters or ‘cubbies’ out of the bush in the nature reserve behind our suburban Canberra house. I would gather sticks and branches, and lean them against a fallen log or low-hanging branch of a tree. Taking my blackened, fire-licked billy from the shed and a backpack of snacks and precious things, I would sit inside my hand-constructed shelter, arrange my collection of nostalgic objects, and make tea on my imaginary camp fire. I longed to return to something. Perhaps I simply wanted to return to my childhood in Alice Springs and weekends spent camping in dry riverbeds with blazing fires and warm swags. This was a place where I felt intimately close to the land and where my family felt closer to each other, where the function of inhabiting and cohabiting seemed simpler and less fraught. Perhaps the longing was, in fact, tapping into the human dwelling instinct that Bachelard describes, which comes from these embodied movements akin to refuge. Perhaps it was both.

In Bachelard’s chapter on nests, we are made aware of a number of phenomenological images that lead us to see the comparison between a nest and a house. Drawing on the poem, *Le nid tiède* [The Warm Nest] by Jean Caubère, Bachelard draws our attention to the association we can make between the image of a nest and of an old home:

*Le nid tiède et calme  
Où chante l’oiseau*

*Rapelle les chansons, le charmes  
Le seuil pur  
De la vieille maison.*

[The warm, calm nest  
In which a bird sings

Recalls the songs, the charms,  
The pure threshold  
Of my old home.]

In the poem, the nest performs as a trigger for Caubère's lost intimacy with an old home; perhaps his first home (Bachelard 2014, pp. 119-120). When I encountered these Knocklofty shelters or human nests, I found myself contemplating thoughts and images of withdrawal, concealment and security. I also felt the same nostalgic longing for the simplicity I had felt as a child – a sort of *homesickness*. Bachelard suggests that, when we daydream of nests, we experience a paradox – we understand the fragility of this form, and yet we find ourselves with images of protection and security. We return, he suggests, to the sources of the oneiric house – a house where we can live in complete security and wellbeing. For many of us, this is our first home, or the image of our first home.



Fig. 11 (left) Antonia Aitken, *Shelter play*, 2015, paper-cut woodcut print, dimensions variable; Knocklofty shelter, digital photographs, 2015–2017, dimensions variable.





Fig. 12 Antonia Aitken, Knocklofty shelters, digital photographs, 2015–2017, dimensions variable.



### *Nesting the body: the work of James Tylor and Marlena Creates*

The Knocklofty shelters led me to look at a number of artists and artworks that explored an innate desire to return to or seek intimacy with land. Through my engagement with online international walking art research hubs, *Walking Artists Network* and *W.A.L.K* (Walking, Art, Landskip and Knowledge) at the University of Sunderland, I came across many artists working globally who use walking as a key methodology for their place-based practices. There is an ever-growing network of artists and scholars sharing their projects broadly and informing important research on the poetic, aesthetic and activist aspects of embodied practice.

Two artists have been particularly influential in this research. First, Canadian artist Marlena Creates, whose performative photographic works explore phenomenological embodied relations with place. They resonated with me because of their evocation of a strange melancholic longing similar to the feelings that the Knocklofty shelters raised. Importantly, Creates is also negotiating her ideas as a settler descendant in lands that have settler-colonial legacies. She presents this as an awareness that informs, but is not explicitly communicated within, her interactions with place.

Second, Indigenous Australian artist James Tylor has become a highly relevant link within my project. In his work, Tylor reflects on and exposes the impacts of colonisation on his culture and his relationships to place and identities. Like Creates, Tylor uses a form of performative photography whereby the photograph becomes a remnant of a trace of an event. His use of photography is both a work in itself and the record of a direct embodied interaction with place.

Both Creates and Tylor engage in ritual-like processes in which they make or perform a series of repeated actions or gestures that are recorded and documented through photography and film. Together, these ritualised actions form an accumulation of knowledge in and of place through practice. Both artists explore ideas of dwelling, loss and longing in their artwork, and each acknowledges their situated and responsive bodies, attempting to generate dialogical practices through slow, repetitive action, touch and listening. These are key themes that have informed and emerged in my own project.

### *James Tylor: Un-resettling*

James Tylor's work came to my attention almost accidentally. In 2017, three years after I had begun my daily walks and documentation of the Knocklofty shelters, I re-noticed an exhibition invitation pinned on the wall of my studio. I had collected it in 2013 at *Constance*, an Artist Run Initiative in Hobart, the year before I moved to Tasmania. The invitation is a square black-and-white digital photograph, depicting a stick shelter nestled underneath a large rock face. The shelter has been hand-coloured with green pigment to highlight the green of branches used in its construction and brown pigment to highlight a campfire rock at the opening of the hut. This colouring references the nineteenth-century overpainting tradition to enliven the subject within a monochromatic image. The colour in the work operates as a question for the viewer – is this subject a remnant of a distant past or implanted in the present? The work is titled *Un-resettling* (Half dome hut on cliff face); the artist: James Tylor.



Fig. 13 James Tylor, *Un-resettling* (Half dome hut on cliff face), 2013, hand-coloured digital print, 50 x 50 cm.

I immediately noticed that this image had an uncanny likeness to the Knocklofty shelters I had been documenting. This set me on a path to research Tylor's practice. Limited information is available about this specific work, and I have had no response to my efforts to contact Tylor. I did, however, learn that some of his works were enacted and developed in Tasmania in 2012 and 2013, whilst he was studying at the University of Tasmania. Locals had told me that the Knocklofty shelters were built by a young Indigenous man as part of his art practice. Putting this together, it seems highly likely that at least some of the

shelters I have encountered are the remnants of shelters made by Tylor during this time, just before I began walking in Knocklofty myself. The uncertainty of this link is, in the end, unimportant, as Tylor's work has become highly influential in my own thinking and art practice beyond this initial experience.

James Tylor's expanded photography practice explores his identity within the context of Australia's complex cultural history. Tylor prefaces his artist's statements and interviews by explicitly situating himself within his multi-cultural heritage 'comprising' as he states of 'Nunga (Kurna), Mauri (Te Arawa) and European heritage (English, Scottish, Irish, Dutch, Iberian and Norwegian)' (Tylor 2017).

Using analogue and digital techniques, including outmoded technologies and processes such as the Daguerreotype and collodion, he examines technologies that were used during early colonisation to document Aboriginal culture and the emergent colony. By re-appropriating these Western photographic technologies to tell his story and the stories of his Indigenous communities, Tylor is reclaiming and shifting the lens from a settler perspective to an Indigenous one and, in doing so, shifting the dominant narrative.

Relearning, re-enlivening and restoring cultural practices is another way Tylor is addressing the loss and displacement felt by himself and his communities through settler colonisation. Tylor is actively engaging with Aboriginal elders and community, as well as archival resources, to learn how to build, make and practice certain lost cultural traditions – knowledge which was once deeply embodied and tacit for his people. He writes:

As a young Australian with Indigenous ancestry I feel that it is extremely important to learn, understand, practice and teach Indigenous culture. In this self-experimental exploration project, I have attempted to re-learn some traditional practices from oral discussions, language, drawings, paintings, photographs, historical journals and publications. Re-learning these practices has given me a deeper understanding of Australian history, the environment and my ancestors' cultural practices but most importantly a great understanding of my own Indigenous identity (Tylor 2017).

Tylor learnt how to make huts and tools with Barkindji community members when he was a child in Menindee, in the far West of New South Wales, and has more recently worked with Ngarrindjeri master weaver Yvonne Koolmatrie to learn basketry techniques. These skills are being used to make new tools and dwellings, which he creates or performs in the environment. The dwellings are often made in collaboration with others and have been documented with both video and still photography.

The series of *Un-resettling (Dwelling)* photographs that I saw in the exhibition at Constance in Hobart in 2013 drew on techniques and formats that, somewhat uncomfortably, produced images reminiscent of nineteenth-century ethnographic recording traditions. It is here that the tension in the work lies. In her catalogue essay, James Tylor: ‘Un-resettling’, curator Helen Hughes suggests that the huts and lean-tos invoke a complex temporality, whereby they ‘may be conceived not as a repetition or reproduction of a past practice, but rather a continuation that extends both backwards and forwards in time’ (Hughes 2017, para 6). The viewer experiences simultaneous feelings of nostalgia – produced by the cropping and composition of the image and its use of monochrome with hand-colouring – characteristics that reiterate an ethnographic objectification of the subject. At the same time, we experience the shelter as activated and present, helped by the use of digital photographic techniques and printing, the pixel contributing to a contemporary reading.



Fig. 14 (left) James Tylor, *Un-resettling* (Dome hut with stone wind break), 2013, hand-coloured digital print, 50 x 50 cm; Fig. 15 (right) James Tylor, *Un-resettling* (fallen tree half dome hut), 2013, hand-coloured digital print, 50 x 50 cm.

In this series of photographic works, the artist’s body is never captured within the frame. This points to the way that the artist plays with his position as both the maker and recorder, subject and viewer. This device in his work operates as a highly engaging tension, and clearly comes from his continual internal negotiation with how to situate himself within his intercultural identity.

I have found myself thinking when drawing and photographing the Knocklofty shelters about a time when similar dwellings may have been made by the Muwinina, shielding their community from the wild mountain weather. I think about what it would have been like to be a Muwinina person experiencing early colonial settlement in Hobart, with settlers entering and using these hunting grounds for their own purposes – with no permission or acknowledgement of a prior relation to the place.

Taylor's works raise these questions for me. The works communicate the experience of displacement through an exploration of re-placement, a process that is a powerful assertion of cultural continuation and marked with a nostalgic longing. When I see these works, I find myself caught in an uncomfortable realisation of the discontinuity of a particular way of life. I have felt this strongly in Tasmania, particularly during my walking in places, such as Bruny Island and areas around Hobart, that contain the evidence of the once rich and flourishing communities that existed before colonial settlement. This has recently been heightened through my walks with Indigenous community members, who have shared their cultural knowledge and stories of violent conquest whilst walking the middens and quarries made by their ancestors. Like Tylor, the Palawa people are walking and relearning skills and techniques, reviving and restoring knowledge in powerful acts of decolonisation.

### ***Marlene Creates: Sleeping places***



Fig. 16 Marlene Creates, *Sleeping Places, Newfoundland*, 1982, black & white photographs, selenium-toned silver prints, 27 x 39 cm each.

Whilst I found James Tylor's works and practice in my backyard, in a Hobart Gallery and in Knocklofty, I came to Marlene Creates thorough my research into walking as an aesthetic practice. She kept appearing in literature as an example of an artist exploring modes of being in the land that was sensitive to the notion of two-way or reciprocal

relation. Like many under-recognised women artists during the 1960s and 1970s American Land Art Movement, she was now being regarded as an innovative figure, who at the time was making work antithetical to the grandiose and monolithic actions of many of her male counterparts. In addition to the important discussions around her work, her deceptively simple photographic work, titled *Sleeping Places, Newfoundland*, 1982, moved me significantly and provoked further inquiry into her methodologies.

In this series of photographs, Creates photographically recorded the residual impressions of her body, left after a night's sleep in twenty-five different locations within Newfoundland. This set of black-and-white, selenium-toned silver prints, each 27 x 39 cm, invoke a melancholic, tender intimacy. The *Sleeping Places* series elicits a similar enchantment and disquiet to the Knocklofty shelters. The imprint feels as if it still radiates heat from the body that is now gone, and this absence or exposure makes me feel slightly voyeuristic and slightly uncomfortable, almost fearful. I feel as if I am witnessing something I should not. The same sentiment is articulated by writer Robert McFarlane in his essay on Creates' work, 'Hollow Places and Wordcaves', when he writes:

There is something creaturely to them – one thinks of a hare's 'form', the shallow depression of imprint left where the hare has been lying, the beginning of a bird's nest – but the human cause of the making remains clear. Yet they are also oddly, quietly disturbing. The heart of every image glows a spectral silver from the extra light reflected by the flattened blades of grass or the pressed-down fern leaves. And while the Newfoundland earth seems, in Coleridge's phrase, 'quite soft,' the photographs refuse to offer comfort. At the edges of each mute image presses a sense of exposure, tending to danger (MacFarlane 2017, p. 101).

In an artist's statement from 1982, Creates writes that this work was one of her 'most intimate projects about meeting the land' (Creates 1982). The series was undertaken over two months of journeying around Newfoundland, and captures the weight and form of her sleeping body impressed in different terrains. 'The land has a memory', writes Creates (1982), a statement reflective of her attitudes and making methodologies that are, amongst other things, aimed at dismantling the perceived separation of nature and culture and communicating her belief that the relationship between herself and the land is intrinsically dialogical: a two-way impression.

Creates' sense of intrinsic relation with place and also responsibility in that relation has developed through a phenomenological approach, but influenced greatly, I would deduce,

from two clear origins. The first is an awareness of being a settler descendant in Aboriginal land. This is land that has been dramatically changed through a continual process of colonial appropriation. The second, from a feminist position, is making place-based work that is antithetical to the American Land Art movement.

On the periphery of the North-American Land Art movement of the late 1960s and 1970s, Creates, like many North-American women artists, including Michelle Stuart, engaged at that time in making practices more aligned with UK conceptual artists such as Richard Long and Hamish Fulton. United by a desire to make low-impact, ephemeral art actions and interventions, these artists were critical of what they perceived to be violent and possessive earth-moving actions in the quest to build monuments by artists such as Robert Smithson and James Turrell. Creates and Long made clear statements about why they differentiated their practices from this Land Art movement. In an interview with photographer Walter Lewis, Creates stated:

The large-scale interventions on the land that were being done in the '60s and '70s, mostly in the USA, did not seem to me to be appropriate actions for *art*. Taking a bulldozer or a dump truck to the land seemed antithetical to me; I did not want to inflict any large-scale permanent changes on the environment (Creates 2014, para 13).

For Richard Long, who grew up fully immersed in the English hill walking tradition of travelling the publicly accessible *old ways*, it did not seem necessary to own and possess land to make monumental statements: 'I was interested in scale, but not in mass, not in building 'monuments' (Brindley 2015, p. 115). Like Creates, Long is interested in ideas of impermanence in his work, echoing the impermanence of human life. He was paraphrased by art historian Rudi Fuchs in 1986:

In conversation Richard Long remarked that he liked many of his works to be impermanent. That way they were more human, their limited physical existence in the world resembling the impermanence and reality of human life (Fuchs 1986, p. 45).

These artists were, and still are, concerned with capturing the intimate impression and residual marking that one imprints as one moves, pauses and rests. Whilst sculptural interventions are made in the land and made of the land, they emphasise the importance of the artist's physical labour as process and are largely left in the environment. Coming from a period of growing environmental awareness and within the context of the Conceptual Art movement, where questions were being raised about the role and cogency of the eternal art



object within contemporary art, these artists sought new strategies for communicating and drawing particularly on the peripatetic experience (Roelstraete 2010, pp. 2-5).

For these artists, walking became central to practice – or, in Richard Long’s case, became his art practice. Walking provided a particular way of engaging with places where the body and land were in direct relation. Creates remarked about her practice: ‘Paying attention to what is there has always been at the centre of my practice and focusing on its sensorial aspects by looking, touching, listening, and appreciating’ (Creates 2014, para. 28).

Creates in particular has taken the path of exploring notions of place attachment and, like me, has developed work that is seeking out how we might further nest or make intimate relations with the environments we inherit. As a Canadian-born settler descendant, Creates is also innately aware of the potency of these questions within the context of settler-colonial places. She has in recent years made her dwelling on six acres of boreal forest in Northern Canada, to see how an art practice can be enriched and sustained by living in and experiencing one area of land for an extended period of time. She is seeking out multiple layers of relation in the stories and pathways that crisscross this particular piece of forest. She searches for these through oral and written human histories and close observation of its more-than-human ecology.



Fig. 17 Marlene Creates, *Larch, Spruce, Fir, Birch, Hand: Blast Hole Pond Road, Newfoundland* 2007, black-and-white photographs, selenium-toned silver prints, 27 x 39 cm each.



In her ongoing photographic work *Larch, Spruce, Fir, Birch, Hand: Blast Hole Pond Road, Newfoundland 2007*, Creates pays respect to the native trees within the forest by placing a hand on the trunk and documenting this moment of contact.

This series of black and white photographs concerns the inter-relationship of three entities: first, individual native trees; second, their context in the collective of the forest system; and third, the human perceiver, as manifested by the gesture of my hand touching the tree trunks (Creates 2007).

One thing that strikes me about Creates' work is that over the span of her forty-year practice she has continually sought ways of visualising and conceptualising touch and intimacy with place.

I'm slowly tuning my body and my reflexes to its details. I'm coming to know this habitat by engaging with it in various ways: corporally, emotionally, intellectually, instinctively, linguistically, and in astonishment (Creates 2007).

Creates sees herself 'not only as spectator, but an active, subjective participant' and her 'work as a co-production with the environment' (Creates 2014, para. 29). Importantly, she recognises herself as inheritor and caretaker of the land she inhabits, not as an owner. She explores this idea through her ritualised actions of daily inhabiting the place – walking and documenting interactions with photography, moving image and writing. The land is continually revealing itself to her through slow, close, daily engagement. She also shares this experience through collaborative and shared exploration of this place with her local community – both Indigenous and non-Indigenous – seeing the land she legally owns as part of the whole boreal forest, and part of an existing place.

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The methodologies developed by Marlena Creates and James Tylor raise important questions about how artists might be part of finding an ethics for decolonisation in the context of settler-colonial places. For Tylor, acts of resistance to the colonial gaze are present through his reclamation of the photographic processes once used to objectify his people. Shifting the gaze to a complex position of being both observed and observer places his audience in a strange position of voyeurism. Tylor's use of repetition to embed the knowledge of cultural traditions and skills in his body and in place speaks to the words of Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson in her discussion of *affirmative refusal*

as a strategy for decolonisation: ‘Our way of life is repetitive’, she states, ‘if we are not continually and collectively engaged in creating and re-creating our way of life, our reality, our distinct unique cultural reality doesn’t exist’ (Simpson 2017, pp. 200-201).

For Creates, who is not explicitly speaking of a decolonising objective through her practice, there are nonetheless core ideas within her work which point to an undoing of colonial power and ownership frameworks. Attributing certain values to her approach from her phenomenological philosophy, Creates aims for reciprocal models of place relationship, as expressed in her aim to be an active, subjective participant and co-producer with place. Creates’ work demonstrates how deeper connection can come when we attempt to integrate local environments into our daily lives, taking from them sustainably and acknowledging their vulnerability, autonomy and history in our re-presentations of them. Like Tylor’s project of *un-resettling* which demands a different conceptualisation of place attachment, Creates is attempting to build place relationships that dissolve the separation between her body and the land.

#### ***Image cluster: dislodged attachment & enfolding matrix***

I took the holdfast found on Lighthouse Bay through a familiar iterative making process, whereby I explored the potential of its form in various media, with each experiment informing the next action. There is an initial attraction to a form and speculative hunch about its importance to my core ideas, but until I take it through the process of development, I often cannot pin-point how. Walking daily in the Knocklofty Reserve, I became fascinated by the Knocklofty shelters and the questions they raised for me concerning attachment, loss and longing. At some point in the process, I began seeing the Knocklofty shelters and the Bruny Island holdfast as one complex *entanglement* or, to use Bachelard’s term, an *image cluster*. I began to see the shelter in the holdfast and the holdfast in the shelter.



Fig. 18 Antonia Aitken, *Untitled: image cluster I*, 2015, laser-cut plywood, ink, charcoal, and woodcut print on paper.

Returning to the chapter ‘Nests’ in *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard speaks of an *image cluster* in which two forms are dreamed of in relation to each other, forming a double image, forming ‘something else than itself’ (Bachelard 2014, p. 98). He draws this idea from Van Gogh’s intuitive linking of two images through his painting process – the nest and the thatched cottage.

Van Gogh, who painted numerous nests, as well as numerous peasant cottages, wrote this to his brother: ‘The cottage, with its thatched roof, made me think of the wren’s nest.’ For a painter, it is probably twice as interesting if, while painting a nest, he dreams of a cottage and, while painting a cottage, he dreams of a nest. It is though one dreamed twice, in two registers, when one dreams of an image cluster such as this. For the simplest image is doubled; it is itself and something else than itself (Bachelard 2014, p. 98).

I am familiar with the process of holding or dreaming two or more images at once. Sometimes I do not know for quite some time why I am bringing two or more forms together, but I trust in the ambiguous linkages that my mind is making. When an image cluster forms, I consider it as a cue that my underlying thinking is beginning to reveal itself. Complex connections are being made and the work is heading towards entangled and poetic interpretations of my experience.

The images of the holdfast and the shelter have, for me, clear aesthetic and conceptual connections – they are entanglements of interwoven lines that provide protection and refuge. At the same time, they are ephemeral and vulnerable in the context of their fluid and constantly changing environments. As images or metaphors for my project, their porosity and ephemerality is the antithesis of notions of stability and fixity, which, as I have discussed earlier in the exegesis, is important for breaking down prevalent ideas about inviolable boundaries and plots of place in Western cultural perceptions of placedness. Drawing from these images that challenge or shift these ideas of fixity has enabled me to explore a shift in my own thinking about these things.

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The *holdfast* is a form of attachment. In the life cycle of the giant kelp (*Macrocystis pyrifera*), the algae sends out lines (haptera) of stabilising connection to another substrate, usually rock (*About Antarctica: Kelp* 2016). The resultant growth of anchor lines is known as the holdfast. These *lines* of connection twist and twine around the substrate to create an attachment that can both flex and hold strong with the powerful movement of ocean currents.

In *The Life of Lines* (2015), Tim Ingold explores the sociological and ecological formation and meaning of lines. Lines, or our clinging apparatus, connect us to others, forming lines of correspondence. In the most basic sense, Ingold suggests, it is in the entangling of our lines that our sociality is formed. This entangling, corresponding and knotting action of lines he terms ‘meshwork’ (p. 3).

In his chapter, ‘Octopuses and anemones’, Ingold discusses the origins of sociological thought and the various theories of sociality. Looking at sociologist Marcel Mauss’ 1925 *Essay on the Gift*, he draws our attention to the often overlooked importance of Mauss’ use of oceanic metaphor to describe humans in contrapuntal relationships, whereby independent entities are in movement and in this movement are both individual and collective (Ingold 2015, pp. 10-11). Using the image of octopuses and anemones in self-perpetuating motion, Mauss describes the fluid reality in which we are embedded and from where we send out lines of stabilising connection – in doing so, entwining with others. Ingold writes:

In this oceanic world, every being has to find a place for itself by sending out tendrils which can bind it to others. Thus hanging on to one another, beings strive to resist the current that would otherwise sweep them asunder (Ingold 2015, p. 11).

The dislodged holdfast, I have come to realise, is perhaps a metaphor for my initial state of *place panic* in Tasmania. The holdfast, once detached from its oceanic rock platform and eventually from its photosynthesising kelp blades, floats unhinged. Displaced and moving with the ocean currents, it eventually finds itself ashore, sometimes at a great distance from its initial place of attachment.

Through my sustained interaction in place over four years, I have sent out lines of stabilising connection; lines of relation which have resulted in meaningful and intimate connection with place. Over the project, these lines have led to important and informative conversations with people in the local community, including a growing relationship and dialogue with members of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community. Through conversation I am slowly learning more and more about the kelp from an Aboriginal perspective and this is informing a better understanding of the role of the algae in cultural practice.

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The image of the shelter began to take on two threads of thought. First, I began to see the multiplying shelters in Knocklofty as entanglements of place that enfold the body. This was heightened by my reading of Bachelard's writing on 'Nests' and particularly his notions discussed earlier about the nest as an image of lost intimacy. This connection was triggered by my recollections of cubby-making as a child and by the work of Creates and Tylor. Second, through philosopher Edward S. Casey's articulation of place as 'the envining subsoil of our embodiment', subtending and enfolding us (Casey 1993, p. xvii), the shelters became a way to contemplate and articulate the notion of the matrix – the matrix being the underlying structure or substance in which we are embedded. The notion of subtending and enfolding place has become a key concept for speaking about the way I see the land underlying my body and the material substrates of printmaking and drawing that support my marks. Like the land, the wood block, paper, digital files and projections are active grounds and structures to interact with, shift and interrupt through my iterative process of making.

Printmaking is a process made up of three key elements: *the matrix*, the substrate into which the mark is made; *the mark*, the embodied, mechanical or digital gesture, impression or incision made directly into the matrix; and *the print*, the resultant marks left from the pressing of the matrix onto another, generally more malleable, surface. Whilst this is the traditional order of things within the printmaking process, I have let go of this hierarchy to explore the potential of the entire reproductive loop intrinsic to the medium. Most significantly, I have come to understand the printmaking process as an *iterative generation*, whereby the process is continuous and ever becoming.

The printmaking matrix historically represented the most important, but mostly hidden, site of the printmaker's gesture, whilst the resultant print represented the final state for publication and display. This is no longer the dominant way of thinking within contemporary printmaking practices. In her essay, 'New strategies – Printmaking as a spatial process, as a transmissional process, and as a spatial-transmissional process' (2017), Finnish print-based artist Päivikki Kallio, advocates for a shift in thinking and practice, away from a linear or 'chain of events' projection, which leads to the creation of a visual 'surface':

Perceptions of my own artistic practice have led me to think that we cannot limit ourselves to visual surface (the actual proof) when looking at printed art; the entire printmaking process, or a part of it, is an essential aspect of its contents or substance (Kallio 2017, p. 88).

Since the 1990s, printmaking has entered into a critical questioning of itself through a rejection of the edition, a growing emphasis on interdisciplinarity, and the accessibility of digital technologies alongside pedagogical models that support theories of praxis (an integration of theory into practice). Many artists are critically engaging with the print medium and making works that both challenge and utilise ideas inherent in its methodologies and material processes. In recent years, expanded forms of printmaking are being recognised as an important part of Contemporary Art discourse. One indicator of this has been the increase in inclusion of print-based practices in international Biennales and major interdisciplinary exhibitions. However, it is widely understood amongst the international printmaking community that there has been a lack of theorisation and research around the medium (Pelzer-Montada, 2008). Much printmaking literature has, until recently, focused on techniques and process, rather than how the practice conceptually lends itself to notions of multiplicity, transference, transformation, adaptation

and appropriation. Fed by the large number of printmakers entering research and the recent increase in critical debate within print centres and educational institutions, there is an emerging literature exploring the materiality and conceptual dimensions of the medium. One of the most recent critical dialogues around print has come from a seminar held in 2015 at Oslo National Academy of Arts in collaboration with Trykkeriet Centre for Contemporary Printmaking. *Printmaking in the Expanded Field* (2017) with a subtitle of 'A pocketbook for the future. Collected texts and thoughts', is a series of selected essays edited by Jan Pettersson, which includes texts by artists, theorists and curators exploring critical topics within printmaking today. These topics include, emerging strategies in print practice, the print in the public sphere, collective print practices, and the integration of digital, mechanical and hand-made print processes. As stated by Pettersson:

New technologies and innovative approaches to the media, by artists from all fields and from many cultures, have given printmaking a relevant and radical meaning (Pettersson 2017, p. 25).

Printmaking, I argue, guides an iterative methodology. Printmaking enables me to recycle and transform images and ideas through a process of repetition, reuse and layering multiple matrices or the same matrix open-endedly. My marks or gestures drawn onto plywood substrates are cut, inked and pressed onto paper; these impressions may then be photographed and scanned into digital files, which are digitally and mechanically printed via laser cut into matrices; these may then be printed, used as drawing tools or exhibited in their own right. Each transference, transformation and iteration leads to new discoveries, feedback loops and crossed boundaries within the medium and my ideas.

My use of the print medium within this project has mimicked my pursuit of understanding of place. Complex arrangements of impressions record my shifting and multilayered sense of entanglement with place. Through engaging with the process of iterative generation, I have found that the forms and images I am working with begin to go beyond the literal. Forms transform into more ambiguous and poetic readings. Just like walking place, once I have stopped traversing the surface and begun to access multiple layers of sensory experience, I become connected to where I am. The artwork and the experience are a direct reflection of each other.

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In order to demonstrate my iterative making approach, I will discuss the process and evolution of the image cluster and demonstrate the way I have pushed and pulled a single thread of inquiry using printmaking and drawing processes and techniques.

Early in the process, I selected the first ink drawing of the holdfast that I had drawn on Bruny Island in 2014. By transforming it through an iterative process, I hoped that I would begin to develop a strong through line of visual and conceptual inquiry within the project. I began by hand-cutting the drawing into a perforated paper stencil and experimented with it in relation to other collaged forms as part of my first series of collage works, *Carrying places* (Fig. 1) discussed in Chapter One. This led me to a number of paper stencil experiments, using drawing and collaging techniques. Enjoying the way the perforated stencils passed light and created shadows, I worked closely with technical staff in the 3D-design studio at the University to explore the possibility of translating this and other paper cut forms into digitally cut woodcut matrices. We discussed the potential of working with very thin marine plywoods that could behave like paper. In preparation for this, I photographed, scanned, digitised the paper stencils of the holdfast form (Figs. 1 and 2) and put them into the 3D-fabrication software for experimenting with the laser cutter and the CNC router (Fig. 19).



Fig. 19 Antonia Aitken, holdfast image process, 2015, Adobe Illustrator file for 3D-fabrication uses.

I cut the form multiple times and in multiple scales, using 1.5 and 3 mm marine plywoods (Figs. 20–23). With these cut matrices, I was able to return to the print studio to experiment with hand processes, including relief printing and steam-bending. I worked through notions of the enfolding matrix, by molding the matrices into cradle-like forms



with steam. Through this processes I began to see how my 2D-forms were able to come alive, peeling and curling out of their flat and static state.

I played with arranging these forms in relation to other stages of the making process and used the camera to document the integration of the various digitally fabricated, print and drawn processes (Figs. 18 and 20). Initially, I took these photographs to document the interplay of the various stages of process; however, I have now come to see these photographic works as an iteration in themselves and a way of layering various processes effectively in one 2D plane.



Fig. 20 Antonia Aitken, *Untitled: image cluster 2*, 2015, laser-cut plywood, ink, charcoal, woodcut print on paper.

I further experimented with the laser-cut and steam-bent forms and their potential to pass and project light and shadow (Figs. 21–23). I made a series of drawings by projecting light through them and capturing the patterns onto the wall in the studio and paper substrates, which led to further iterations.



Fig. 21 Antonia Aitken, *Untitled: peeling holdfast*, 2015, laser-cut plywood, ink and charcoal wall drawing.





Fig. 22 Antonia Aitken, *Untitled: peeling holdfast*, 2015, laser-cut plywood, ink and charcoal wall drawing.



Fig. 23 Antonia Aitken, *Untitled: holdfast shadow*, 2015, ink shadow drawing on Stonehenge paper.

These studio explorations from this period in early 2015 became the starting point for a set of iterative entanglements which resulted in the final set of visual forms used towards my examination work (Fig. 24).



Fig. 24 (top left) Antonia Aitken, holdfast image process, 2015–2017: ink and wash shadow drawing, 60 x 60 cm; (top right) raw laser-cut plywood, 120 x 90 cm; (bottom left) Adobe Illustrator file for 3D-fabrication processes; (bottom right) inked laser-cut plywood form, 60 x 90 cm.

At a point in the process I also began to integrate the image and concept of the shelter with the holdfast, not as a literal depiction, but working with the idea of *enfolding place / enfolding matrix* – ideas informed by the shelters and my readings of Edward S. Casey.



By cutting woodcuts, printing those woodcuts onto mulberry paper, and then cutting and removing various elements within the repeated image, I played with layering multiple prints. The printed images began to take on layered and three-dimensional form, speaking to the physicality of my sense of slow integration or enmeshment with place. Through this iterative experimentation, the holdfast forms stopped floating in undefined grounds and became integrated into a complex matrix of marks.



Fig. 25 Antonia Aitken, *Untitled* (holdfast woodcut iteration), 2016, hand-cut and layered woodcut print mulberry paper, 60 x 60 cm each.



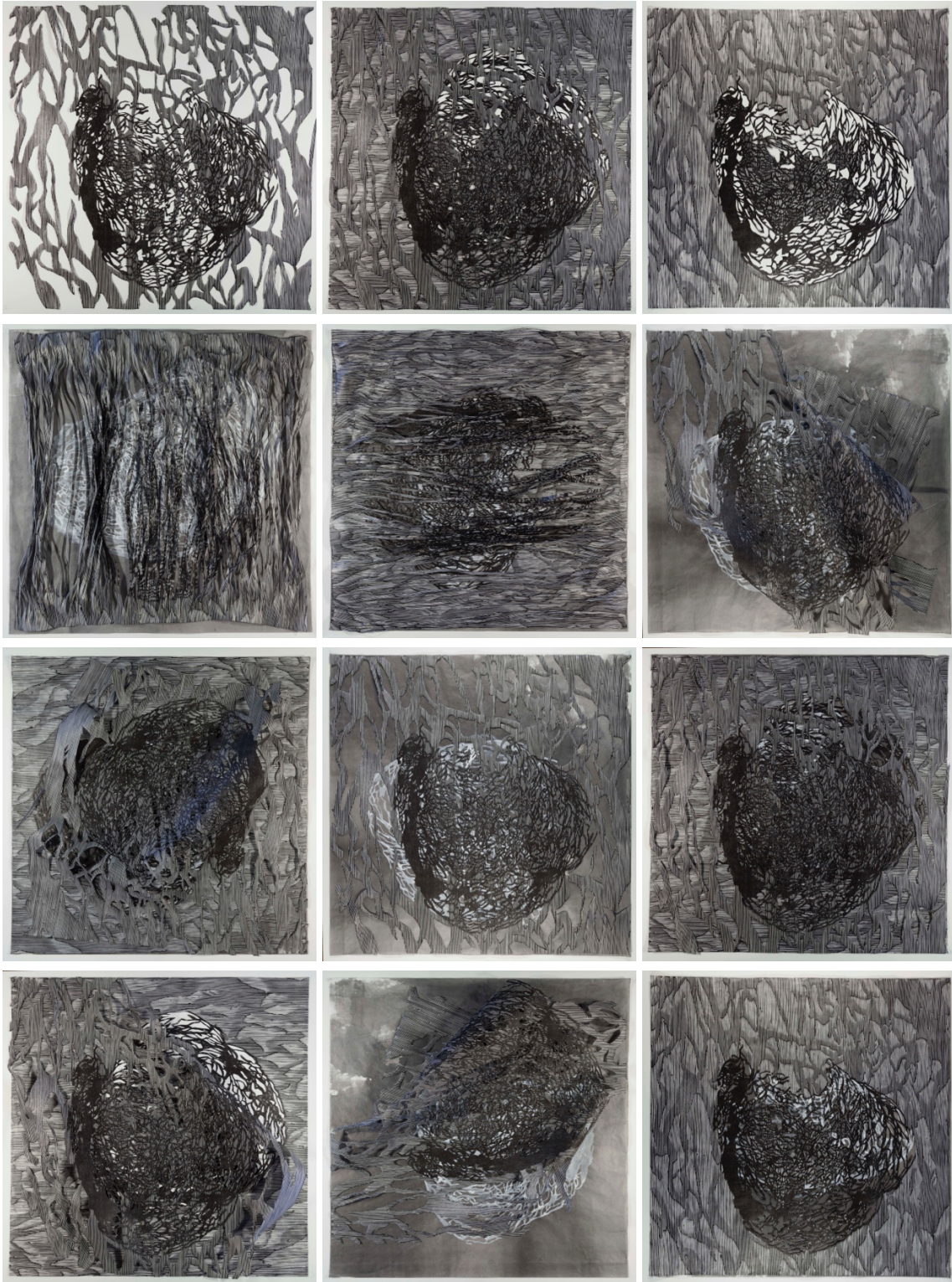


Fig. 26 Antonia Aitken, *Untitled* (holdfast woodcut iterations), 2016, photographed hand-cut and layered woodcut prints on mulberry paper, ink drawings, 60 x 60 cm each.

The forming of the image cluster through the iterative making process helped me to arrive at images that spoke of expanded notions of *networks*, *knots* and *webs*. No longer was the holdfast simply a holdfast, but it was taking on multiple meanings and associations.

The drawn, printed, hand- and machine-cut wood matrices formed entangled meshes – lines interwove, knotted and fused. This moment coincided with a point in the project when I was beginning to feel a deepening connection to Tasmania, assisted by a range of social connections and building sense of community.

Similar to the series of collages, *Carrying places* (Figs. 1 and 2), which were made very early on in the process, this series of photographs taken of the *Untitled* (holdfast woodcut iterations) communicated an iterative shifting of form (Fig. 26). Responding to this, I experimented with the potential of animating them. Through the utilisation of slow, continuous transitions, a series of 17 images merge over 15 minutes. The final animation (Fig. 27) speaks to the movement inherent in the iterative process, which the still prints could only partially communicate. It also, importantly, articulated the shifting place relationships and slippery search for groundedness central to my research.



Fig. 27 Antonia Aitken, *Untitled* (holdfast woodcut iterations), 2018, HD Video still.

Continuing to play with the idea of porous, breathable matrices that were flexible and filtering, I began to work further with the ideas of perforating the surface of the matrix using the laser cutter and router. There were two threads of work that emerged from this moment.



The first was a series of lung-like woodcuts (Figs. 28–30) that related to my ideas about notions of internal and external passage and the way walking can simultaneously move us between *scapes* (which I will explore further in Chapter Three). The second thread is a continuously expanding work derived from details of the original holdfast shadow drawings but cropped to investigate the form from another perspective. The *Untitled Scapes* (holdfast iterations) (Fig. 33) play with the idea of looking from within the holdfast mesh or web.

Quite unexpectedly, the perforated forms were beginning to reference the body – images evocative of the lungs, heart and brain and the internal passages such as capillaries, veins and arteries. At the same time, they also referenced maps and aerial perspectives of land.



Fig. 28 Antonia Aitken, *Untitled 1* (holdfast iterations), 2016, ink drawing, hand- and laser-cut plywood, 120 x 90 cm. Photography by Julien Sheffer.



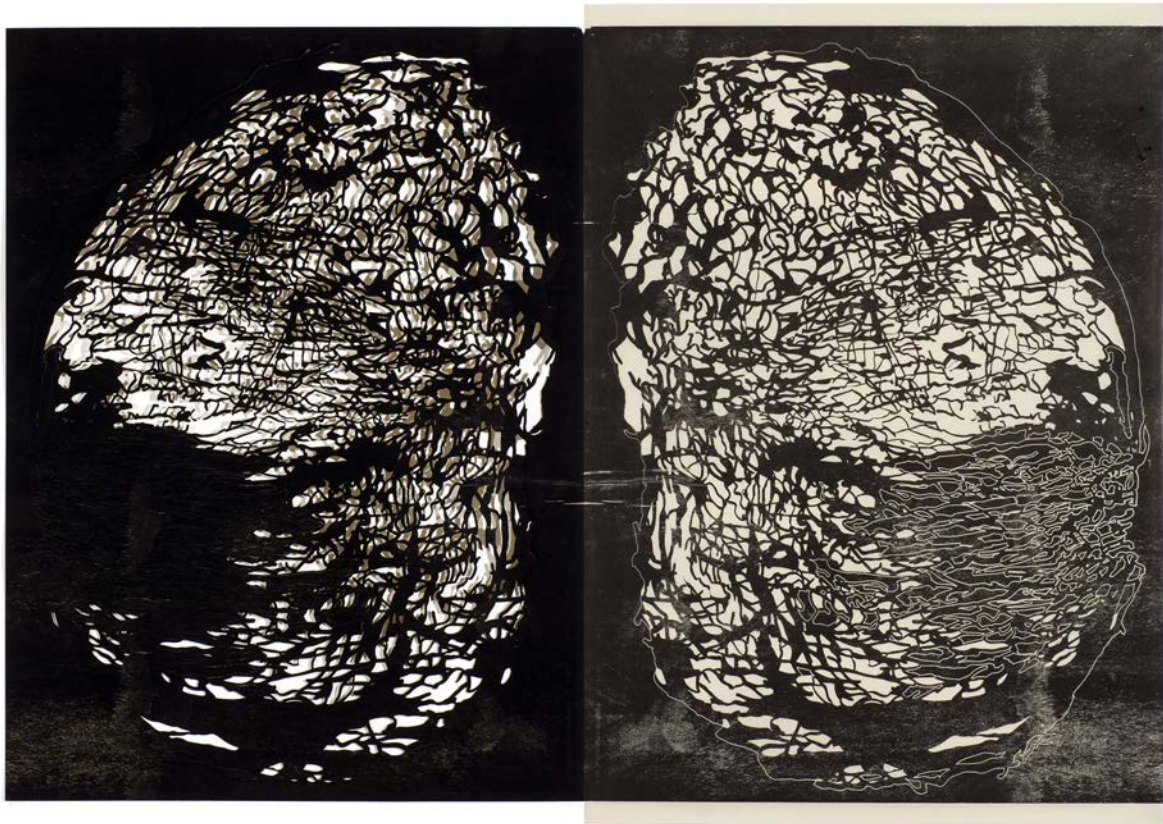


Fig. 29 Antonia Aitken, *Untitled 3 (holdfast iterations)*, 2016, laser-cut plywood and print on Kitikata paper, 120 x 180 cm. Photography by Julien Sheffer.

I began to work with reflection and symmetry, qualities inherent in both printmaking and in the body. Printmaking enables experimentation with mirroring between the matrix and the print. The Old English term *pair* is derived from the Old French *paire*, from Latin *paria*, meaning ‘equal things’ (Oxford Dictionary 2018). Through my understanding of the printmaking process, I have come to see the matrix and the print as inseparable pairings: one does not exist without the other. Similarly, I have come to understand notions of embeddedness with place: the matrix of place, like the woodcut matrix, is the site of my physical gesture or impression. The print and my body are the product of their matrix. With this idea, I have created a series of paired works. These bring the prints and my *walking, breathing drawings* (which I discuss in Chapter Three) together.

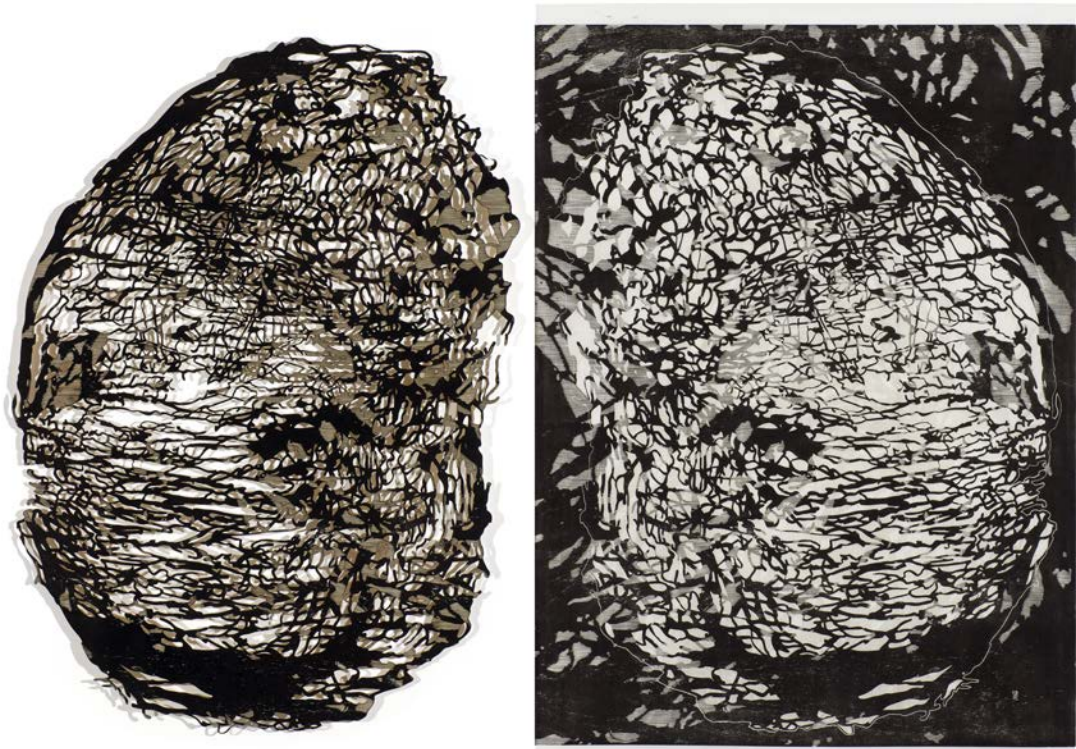


Fig. 30 Antonia Aitken, *Untitled 4* (holdfast iterations), 2018, laser-cut plywood and print on mulberry paper, 120 x 180 cm. Photography by Julien Sheffer.

The second thread came from my experience of sitting inside the Knocklofty shelters and looking out through the interlocking sticks and branches that created a mesh or web-like screen. Taking the initial images from the shadow drawings, hand-drawing and cutting them in plywood, I added digital laser-cut layers to perforate the surface of the woodcuts. These woodcut matrices were then printed multiple times onto mulberry paper, which were then hand-cut to create complex layers of interlocking threads (Figs 31-33).

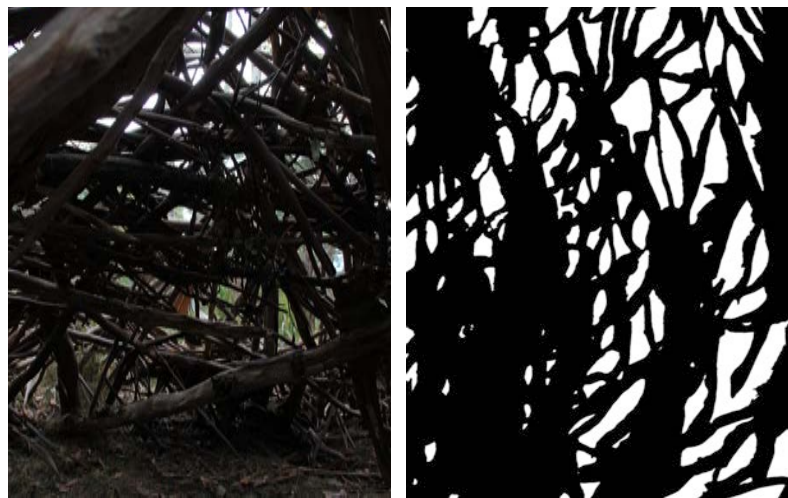


Fig. 31 (left) Antonia Aitken, documentation of Knocklofty shelter, digital photograph; (right) Adobe Illustrator file.





Fig 32. Antonia Aitken, *Untiled Scape* (holdfast iterations), process image: Adobe Illustrator file, variable dimensions.



Fig 33. Antonia Aitken, *Untiled Scape I* (holdfast iterations), studio test, 90 cm x variable dimensions.

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The *holdfast iterations* developed through my slow and tentative navigation of the complex ground of *lutruwita* / Tasmania. From my walks at Bruny Island and Knocklofty Reserve, I found two key images: the shelter and the holdfast. Over four years I have used them to visually and conceptually interpret a number of intersecting ideas. The shelters lead me to contemplate my inherent desire to nest and seek intimacy with the land, linking to what Bachelard considers to be part of a primal search for the oneiric house – a place of complete security and wellbeing. The holdfast led me to ideas of entangled social relations and fluid attachments, supported by Ingold's concepts of meshwork. This coincided with

my growing awareness of the need to understand place as porous and part of a fluid network of place relationships.

Through an iterative printmaking process, I have produced multiple explorations of these core forms and ideas. The physical making processes and conceptual strands embedded in my print matrices have become interwoven through the actions of repetition, layering, knotting and perforating. The matrices became sites of continual change. This process of making enabled me to understand that my ability to form ethical dialogue and attachments with this place relies on my ability to move and shift within its fluid dynamics.

Artists James Tylor and Marlene Creates have helped to contextualise core ideas which have emerged through this process. By situating my practice alongside a tradition of conceptual land artists such as Creates, I am aligning my process with artists who are attempting to create reciprocal encounters with place through their work. By looking at artists such as Tylor I am also locating my practice within emerging discourses in Australia that consider potential decolonising methodologies.

### **3. Chapter Three | breathing, stepping, thinking**

#### ***Walking internal and external passages***

Walking shares with making and working that crucial element of engagement of the body and the mind with the world, of knowing the world through the body and the body through the world (Solnit 2001, p. 29).

When I drift, meander or traverse a place by walking, I find intimate, tactile and unexpected connections between the place, my thoughts and my marks. A sensation that I have come to understand is informed by the way a walk slows me down and engages my body in a self-propelling, rhythmic movement that frees my mind to simultaneously drift between observations, memories and thoughts. This sense of time interweaves past, present and future in a complex knotting or co-mingling of internal and external experience.

These alternate notions of time have been an important part of my work as I develop methodologies that enable multiple time frames to remain in relation, aligning my aims of recognising the past in the present and understanding the strength in embodied experience. I have been exploring this process throughout the project in different ways, as discussed in Chapter Two. This co-mingling of time is enabled by the iterative and layering processes inherent in printmaking. In this chapter, I expand on the ways I have explored these notions through walking/drawing processes that capture the moving body through sound and direct mark-making.

#### ***Walking and drawing practice: repeating process and passage***

More than ten years ago, I developed a practice of walking and drawing simultaneously. I was searching for ways to directly record and interpret the sensation of simultaneously wandering two scapes – the body-scape and the land-scape. Wearing an armature of copper plates, paper or a journal bound with string against my chest, and with mark-making tools in each hand, I began recording my daily looped walks. Beginning from an established point (such as the front door of the house or studio, or from the parked car), I would set out along loosely pre-determined routes, marking or inscribing each step or breath with a stroke on the copper plate or paper. I would often do these repetitive, performative actions during a residency where a clear timeframe bounded the number of walks I would do.

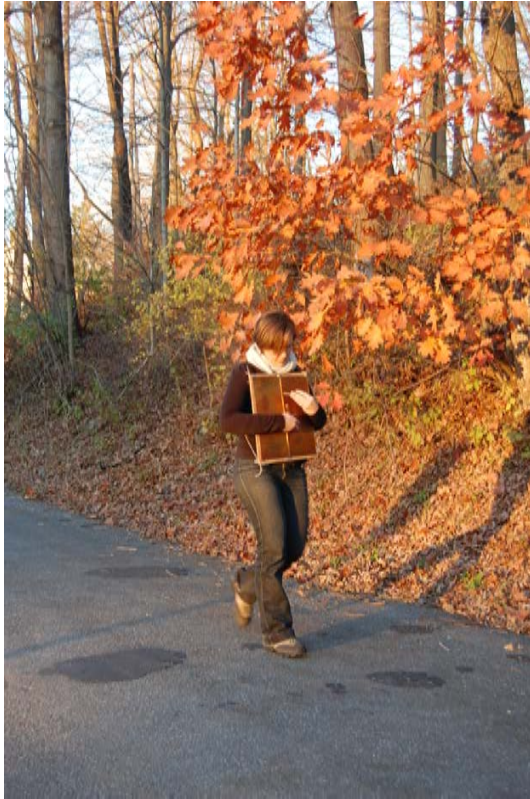


Fig. 34 Antonia Aitken, *Drawing the Step: Left hand for right foot, right hand for left foot. One mark for every step. Seven daily walks, Rosendale, NY, USA, 2012.* Right: in process documentation. Left: artist book spread. Published at Women's Studio Workshop, New York, USA, 2011-12.

I developed this process to be able to walk and draw simultaneously, with every step or breath recorded as a mark – a documentation of my movements through, and an accumulation of, time in place. This drawing process results in a cluster of bodily markings onto a matrix whilst drawing a line in the land. The angle, weight, and speed of the arms and hands create unique accumulations of marks, as does the changing energy and endurance in the body informed by the physical terrain. The presence of the body is contained in a set of strange visceral accretions of lines or scars left on the substrate.

Capturing the body in motion in this way has made me more aware of the physical sensations expressed in my body when walking. As I begin a walk, my heart beat increases, my mouth dries, my breath becomes laboured, and my muscles stretch and strain. Sounds of the body dominate until I am moving fluidly and my awareness can shift to external experience. In an attempt to capture these bodily sounds as I labour and establish smooth rhythmic motion, I began to record the sound of the walks with various external microphones attached to different parts of my body. Depending on the placement

the breath, the steps or the environment are accentuated in the recording. Over the years, this walking drawing process has resulted in artist books and exhibition works which incorporate the drawn and sound components to create intimate experiences for the audience or reader.

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***Walking Journal extract, 23.3.15, Knocklofty Reserve***

*I finally got up to Knocklofty reserve again today after some time. I am realising that it is in the action of walking itself that I find the greatest gift. I am able to think, observe and untangle my thoughts into clearly visible threads. After about an hour I find the ideas flow and I simultaneously begin to really observe the site.*

As I began this project, with my initial process of walking to orient myself, I became increasingly interested in the way that my mind was simultaneously travelling the places of my mind and the place itself. This interest in the links between walking and thinking has enabled me to consider the place of my own work in the long history of philosophers, writers and artists who have found the human speed and rhythm an aid for simultaneously expanding the imagination and focusing thought.

Dieter Roelstraete, in his monograph on Richard Long titled *A Line Made by Walking*, remarks on walking as a cultural artefact in the West:

Well before walking was claimed (re-) invented as an art form in its own right, the walk itself had already been recognised as an important cultural artifact, and the art of walking had become a staple item in the philosophical diet, in particular, of the Western imagination. Some of our culture's greatest and most influential thinkers were avid walkers who often took great pains to document their walks for posterity in an attempt to 'prove' the walks' salutary effects on their thinking habits (Roelstraete 2010, p. 10).

Rebecca Solnit in *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (2001), Merlin Coverley in *The Art of Wandering* (2012), and Frederic Gros in *A Philosophy of Walking* (2014) explore the evolution of the walking philosopher. Both Solnit and Coverley demystify idealistic notions of the sage-like ancient Greek walking philosopher, which is thought to have emerged as a dominant image during eighteenth-century Romanticism, when there were attempts by writers to consecrate walking (Solnit 2001, Coverley 2012).

The link between thinking and walking in the West can indeed be seen in the early customs of the Sophists and Socrates and the Peripatetics in ancient Greece, but the image of the perambulating philosopher, aware of walking's *salutary* effects on thinking, is an idea perpetuated by eighteenth-century figures for whom walking was becoming something to directly reflect upon. Walking for the early Greek philosophers was used as a means for spreading ideas as much as to assist in forming them. Solnit suggests that the very nature of a life dedicated to the exploration of ideas requires one to move. In a quest to know and test, to spread and gain support for new ideas, the philosopher had to move from place to place (Solnit 2001, p. 15).

Solnit and Coverley delve into the history of walking and philosophy in the West, suggesting that we see walking elevated to a 'conscious cultural act' in the eighteenth century with Enlightenment thinker, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Solnit 2001, p. 14, Coverley 2012, pp. 15-19). Rousseau walked extensively – at first, out of necessity, when he left his home in Geneva in 1727 at the age of fifteen and spent a long period itinerantly wandering. Rousseau later returned to walking to support his philosophical and autobiographical thinking and writing life, coinciding with his preoccupation with the impacts of industrialisation and 'progress', to which, he argued, humankind had fallen victim. Rousseau had a desire to see humankind return to the freedom 'within a state of nature, a condition of pure simplicity and self-reliance beyond the harmful interventions of human society' (Coverley 2012, p. 19).

In her analysis of Rousseau as a walking thinker, Solnit suggests that, whilst daring in his ideas, he was also radical because he was the first in the Western philosophical tradition to really express the inner working and circumstances of his musings. He did not separate his philosophical inquiry from his subjective and sensorial experiences of walking, solitude and nature. Rousseau is often regarded as a pioneer of the modern autobiography. As he observes in *The Confessions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (1782),

Never did I think so much, exist so vividly, and experience so much, never have I been so much myself – if I may use that expression – as in the journeys I have taken alone and on foot. There is something about walking which stimulates and enlivens my thoughts. When I stay in one place I can hardly think at all; my body has to be on the move to set my mind going. The site of the countryside, the succession of pleasant views, the open air, a sound appetite, and the good health I gain by walking, the easy atmosphere of an inn, the absence of everything that makes me feel my dependence, of everything that recalls me to my situation – all these serve to free my spirit, to lend a



greater boldness to my thinking, to throw me, so to speak, into the vastness of things, so that I can combine them, select them, and make them mine as I will, without fear or restraint (cited in Coverley 2012, pp. 18-19).

This passage, written in 1770, touches on some core experiences familiar to those of us who walk to seek moments of solitude, reflection and space to *stimulate* and *enliven* thoughts. As expressed in his *Confessions*, for Rousseau, walking invited *boldness* to his thinking and, importantly, created a space to *combine* thoughts and sensorial experience. Solnit suggests that perhaps he and the philosophers who followed were the first in a Western tradition to acknowledge the way that ‘walking is itself a way of grounding one’s thoughts in a personal and embodied experience of the world’ (Solnit 2001, p. 26).

This link between thinking and walking leads us down a great number of routes through the terrain of literary walking into poetic and surrealist realms of nineteenth-century European nature writing and the flâneur’s *dérive*. Aesthetic and poetic walking evolved greatly when walking shifted in the late eighteenth-century from a perfunctory action of getting from one place to another, to one of leisure and choice (Solnit 2001, p. 276). Clear messages and reoccurring narratives arise from three centuries of exploration of walking as a conscious cultural act in the West. The philosophical and creative writing of those who explicitly identified walking as a tool for generating sensory and imaginative thinking and making have informed the way we understand nature, embodiment, the industrial revolution and labor, privatisation of public lands, colonisation and globalisation.

Although in my explorations of walking, making and thinking I have been aware of and influenced by this long history of walking as a cultural act, it has been to the work of more contemporary writers working within the tradition of nature writing that I have primarily turned in my own research. Robert McFarlane (2012) and Nan Shepherd (2008) are key exponents of contemporary walking art and literature discourse. Their works explore the ancient languages embedded in the Old Ways throughout Britain, as well as the phenomenological and metaphysical dimensions of walking. Australian writers, such as Saskia Beudel (2013) and John Blay (2015), also provide important examples of contemporary walking writing, which explores the complex terrain of walking ancient Aboriginal trade routes and negotiating personal and cultural narratives as we move through these places.

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Walking is the repetition of fine movements to generate rhythm and momentum to propel our bodies forward. Repetition has become central to this project. Repetition is a process of seeking deeper knowledge. If we look at the word *repeat*, from the Old French *repetere*, from the Latin *repetere*, *re-* meaning ‘back’ and *petere* meaning ‘seek’ (Oxford Dictionary 2018), we can see how the origins of the word suggest a back and forth motion, to go back to seek. I am using the tacit knowledge embedded in walking as a deliberate generator of rhythm in my body, to stimulate generative thoughts and marks. Repeating action instills the movement in my body.

In *The Thinking Hand*, architect and theorist Juhani Pallasmaa writes, ‘Creative work calls for a double perspective: one needs to focus simultaneously on the world and on oneself, the external space and one’s inner mental space’ (Pallasmaa 2009, p. 20). The action of walking enables me to be focused in the present – sensing and observing – and yet the automatic rhythm assists me to float and weave along a stream of thoughts and memories. I experience this in a similar way when doing other repetitive actions for extended periods of time – like drawing, carving wood blocks, shredding paper and hand-printing with a Japanese baren. These actions enable me to simultaneously engage externally and internally.

Whilst walking, I find my thoughts take on a physical location. When I return home, my sensorial experiences and physical interactions are linked intimately with thoughts and memories – entangled in a form of time-knot. When writing or reflecting about a walk after the event, it is hard to separate what was seen and heard in place, from what was remembered and what was thought.

Solnit makes the point that walking ‘creates an odd consonance between internal and external passage’ (2001, p. 6). It is as if two landscapes (the body and the place) are being wandered and entangled simultaneously. Returning to my journal passage at the beginning of this Chapter, in which I express my satisfaction in walking’s capacity to untangle thoughts, I come to understand that it is not in fact an *untangling* but an ability, when walking, to more easily see the individual threads of thought, memory and observation that structure the knot. It is in the complexity, the knotted nature of these elements, that new connections are formed and new understanding is found.

## ***Knotted time***

One of the core elements that has contributed to my growing sense of entangled or knotted relation with place comes from a shifting perception of time that is heightened by walking. Through my explorations of the way I could simultaneously wander the places of my mind and the place itself, I found that my past place relationships were co-mingling with the places I was walking. I would travel deeply personal narratives, memories and conversations whilst observing, listening and smelling the present place. More often than not, these memories were being triggered by direct sensory encounters in place.

Developing from these experiences, together with the reading I was doing, I became aware of debate amongst decolonisation and place theorists of the damaging impact of modernist conceptions of linear time. By reconsidering notions of successive and progressive ordering of events on a timeline and considering different cultural frameworks, scholars, such as Deborah Bird Rose in her important work *Reports from a Wild Country: Ethics for Decolonisation* (2004), advocate a reconsideration the of past-present-future direction of time.

Rose raises some fundamentally different conceptions of time found in Indigenous cultures. Western directional coordinates consider that which is in front of us as the future and that which is behind us as the past. Discussing the Yarralin people's orientation of time, Rose explains how the 'dreaming is at the heart of time-space co-ordinates' (2004, p. 152). Yarralin people in the present conceive of themselves as the 'behind mob' – people follow behind the ancestors and dreaming, which are directionally in front. This is a complete reversal of Western conceptions, which would naturally place the dreaming, or origin, in the past. To re-orientate time, to consider the source as the future, enables the source to be in direct relation with the present. This has fundamental effects on the way one considers death, notions of progress and, importantly, responsibility to that future origin.

In *Getting Back into Place* (1993), Edward S. Casey also discusses the impact of linear time concepts on our daily lives. Casey begins his discussion of time with the development of the marine chronometer and the quest for longitude. It was this timepiece that captured and standardised / regulated time that aided the determination of longitude and therefore we were able to locate ourselves at sea – 'where one was became equivalent to when one

was' (Casey 1993, p. 6). Revolutionising naval navigation, the invention of the marine chronometer led to 'a form of domination such as the Western world had never known: the subordination of space to time, or "temporocentrism," as we may call it' (p. 6).

Discussing the prominent position time took within physics and philosophy, leading to eighteenth-century notions of causality and time as 'the order of successive things', we see the foundations of modern temporal thinking. Casey makes the point that lives ordered in terms of successive events on a linear timeline have resulted in us seeking 'guidance and solace' from the clock and calendar – systems, he suggests, which perpetuate a sense that time is always running out or down (Casey 1993, p. 7).

We are lost because of our conviction that time, not only the world's time but our time, the only time we have, is always running out or down. All time, it seems, is 'closing time' (Casey 1993, p. 7).

In a successive past-present-future model, where things appear before us in the present and disappear into the past, we also have a sense of closure or demise. Rose suggests that these particular conceptions have had incredibly damaging effects on our society as they perform as powerful systems of moral closure between the past and present and play into colonial triumphal histories of progress, where the past is superseded by the future (Rose 2004, p. 152).

Co-mingled or entangled time allows us to continually shift between present observations, past memories and future imaginings. Merging qualitative changes, as described by Post-colonial theorist Dipesh Chakrabati, uses the metaphor of time-knots, which he attributes to subaltern historian, Ranajit Guha. Time-knots are a powerful way to overcome modernity's linear sequencing of time, especially in regard to the way 'past is overcome and consigned to the past' (cited in Rose 2004, p. 25). Time-knots are the 'entanglements of real life in time' which 'draw us into complex and co-mingled times' (Rose 2004, p. 25). These co-mingled times let us experience the shifting plurality of our own times.

### ***Walking breathing drawings: repeating process and passage***

Once I was in full stride, regularly walking Knocklofty Reserve in 2015 and establishing it as an important place for testing a walking methodology, I began to consider how my familiar process of walking drawing could be used to capture my embodied movement through this place. I began to test a process whereby I would take a series of daily looped

walks from my front door into Knocklofty Reserve (approximately 40–60 minutes in length), record them through sound, and then, once back in the studio, re-listen to the soundtracks and draw in response to the environmental sounds and bodily rhythms captured.

In linking with the dominant forms and ideas around looping that were appearing in other studio works, I intentionally placed the recorder microphone on my chest to capture the cycle of breath whilst walking. Re-listening to the sounds in the studio, I drew in response to these walks – onto both paper and onto the studio wall. The studio environment enabled me to test a range of drawing materials, and image scales, shifting from the original body armature scale of the field-based walking drawings, to using the full extensions of my body. I explored the cycle of breath as a single repetitive arm gesture – the inhale moving both arms upwards from the centre, the exhale moving out and down – together becoming one full breath. Attempting to mimic the sound of breath as I moved through place and navigating the hilly terrain, the speed, length and pressure of the drawn gesture would vary. Moments of smooth, large and steady gestures, as my body settled into its stride, would be followed by moments of slow, smaller gestures, as I stopped to observe and rest, or by moments of inconsistent rhythm and flow as my body laboured or I was met by an unexpected transition in the walk.



Fig. 35 Antonia Aitken, *walking breathing drawing: Knocklofty: 21.9.2016*, 2016, charcoal on wall, digital sound track.

The repetitive action of mark-making leads to an eventual blending of the individual marks to form smooth, lung-like shapes, which holds a sense of rhythm and motion in its blurred edges. As the charcoal grinds away against the wall, it powders the ground and my feet directly under the drawing, leaving a haunting impression of my body's presence.



Fig. 36 Antonia Aitken, *walking breathing drawing: Knocklofty: 21.9.2016*, 2016, charcoal on wall, digital sound track.

Finding the best ways to document the process for exhibition, I worked with the potential of HD digital video to capture the real-time experience of the action. Whilst the remnant wall drawings were highly engaging, it was the rhythmic synchronicity of the hands, and the materiality of the charcoal and graphite hitting the wall with every breath, that translated the repetitive and rhythmic movement inherent in walking. I worked closely with my friend, Scott L. Clarkson, to capture isolated moments within the gesture from the arcing hand, the falling charcoal and symmetry of the body in motion. I selected nine sections of video, each between three to five minutes, which I looped together with the video-editing assistance of student, Otis McDermott. As each frame faded another began, representing the sense of my looped gesture of daily walking. The video work has a corresponding soundtrack of rhythmic drawing – the charcoal hitting the wall, disintegrating, and being smoothed by hands.



Fig. 37 Antonia Aitken, *walking, breathing, drawing: Knocklofty: 21.9.2016*, 2018, HD video still.

As well as recording the body in motion, I considered these *walking breathing drawings* as a potential way of both revisiting a walk from the past and responding in the present through direct mark-making. I wanted to explore whether the soundtrack would perform as a mnemonic device, whereby the ambient sounds of the location and sounds of the moving body could transport me, via memory, to the initial embodied experience of walking in Knocklofty.

There is one particular walk, taken on 21.9.2016 from my front door to Knocklofty Reserve, that I have now enlivened or re-enacted several times in the studio and gallery spaces as part of exhibitions, including: *Entanglement* at Entrepot Gallery, Hobart, 2016; *Walking Matters* at Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, 2018; and, most recently, *Performing Drawing* at the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2018. Each time I revisit this walk, I experience different memories and experiences of the particular place and time. I journey from my front door and into the reserve, triggered by sound cues that locate me spatially. I find that the re-listening and responding through gesture enables me to keep my relationship with this place present, now that I am no longer visiting the site. In many ways, these works are an attempt to put the notion of the *time-knot* into action. The past is brought into relation with the present, dissolving the notion of the timeline through a process of iterative generation.



In September 2018, I was invited to generate one of the *walking breathing drawings* as part of the exhibition *Performing Drawing* at the National Gallery of Australia. This was the first public showing of the drawing action. Breaking a 50-minute walk into three sessions over one day, I re-visited the walk taken on 21.9.2018. The soundtrack of the walk was played through my personal headphones to guide me intimately and to a speaker for the audience. The soundtrack provided the audience with a context for the gestural marks being made. ‘Drawing’, writes Catherine de Zegher, ‘is born from an outward gesture that links inner impulses and thoughts to the other through the touching of a surface with repeated graphic marks and lines’ (2010, p. 23). Witnesses to the *walking breathing drawings* have communicated how the melodic sounds of drawing and breath, and the sight of the moving body and evolving lung-like forms, activated an immediate sensory connection. Commenting on the prominence of sound in live drawing for the witness, artist Brooke Carlson writes:

In the context of live drawing, hearing the weight of the material, the exhausted breath of the body or the scrape of the tool, sound emphasizes the exertion of pressure and energy happening at this point of contact. Here, the role of sound in the experience of live drawing contributes to its tactile sensibilities and the transitioning stages of material and body (Carlson 2017, p. 59).

This exhibition is part of a growing movement which sits within contemporary drawing practice and performance art, termed *performance drawing*. It is a field of practice which has been developing internationally over the last two decades, theorised by curator and contemporary drawing theorist Catherine de Zegher (2001, 2010), and a number of artists and practice-based researchers. The most recent literature is emerging from artists who have engaged with *Draw to Perform*, an international network of artists and researchers working with performance drawing, led by artist Ram Samocha. The UK-based *Draw to Perform* events are reminiscent of early performance art ‘happenings’ of the 1970s, with their emphasis on gesture rather than the production of an art object. Key artists who have participated in *Draw to Perform* and are attempting to define the field within the context of their own practices include Australian artists Kellie O’Dempsey and Brooke Carlson, and British artist Maryclare Foá. O’Dempsey and Foá both define performance drawing by the presence of a ‘witness or observer to activate, be present, or experience the act of drawing’ (O’Dempsey 2016, pp. 19-20).



Performance drawing occurs as an action in front of, and conditioned by, the presence of another.

Not all drawing is a performance drawing because not all drawing is made in front of a witness (Foá 2011, p. 2).

O'Dempsey considers a drawing gesture performative not only when the action is observed live, but also when it is 'recorded by or for lens-based media for the purpose of being seen' (2016, p. 20). Whilst I have never thought about my drawing works as 'performances' in the theatrical sense of the word, I have begun to understand my inclusion within this field because of the emphasis on witnessing, ephemerality and revealing the embodied process of mark-making. Much of the work within the field is exploring the audience as a co-producer through the act of seeing or participating directly in the process, as well questioning the slippery definition of drawing as both an *act* and *artefact*.

I developed my embodied drawings as private actions made in the field and studio, with the remnant traces or marks being the exhibitable or participatory element. I considered ways for the audience to be given hints or cues to the process of their making – through the use of sound to locate the viewer, and formats which invited participation, such as the artist's book. These most recent wall-based *walking breathing drawing* experiments have moved away from the production of a collectable physical object to purely ephemeral gestures. The drawing is made, the trace is left for the duration of the exhibition, and then washed away. The record is in the photographic documentation and with those who witnessed.

Much of the work within this growing field is theorised within recent discussion around embodiment and the phenomenology of perception. Artists are creating works that explore sensorial experience and are often site responsive. Brooke Carlson writes about the recent explosion of work demonstrating the embodied nature of drawing:

Evidencing the physicality of the body in the drawing process has risen in response to the continually advancing digitalized and technological versions of writing, drawing, and marking. By crossing over into the field of performance art, artists have begun to explore how far the gesture can be extended regarding method, process, materials, space, and duration (Carlson 2017, p. 58).

It is not only the expansion and interdisciplinary possibilities available through technology that are contributing to a return to this focus on embodied gesture; it also comes as a response to our sense of disconnection from ourselves, our environment and with others. My research emphasises that by returning to slow, conscious and responsive movement

inherent in actions such as drawing and walking, artists are returning to methodologies which enable intimate and visceral experience and reconnection.

***Richard Long: walking lines and circles***

Artist Richard Long has devoted much of his practice to exploring these very questions: how to translate the physical and embodied nature of walking as art, and how to in place at a certain moment in time to an audience in the gallery space that is often separated from the direct or initial action / experience. Over the span of his fifty-year walking art practice, Long has developed a visual language made up of multiple mediums and approaches, including photography, text, mapping and the direct arranging and drawing with materials from place, both in place and in the gallery. It is in the bringing together of these elements, both documentary and live, that he finds the most evocative way to translate an experience of a particular walk or set of walks.

In 2011, I encountered one of these arrangements at Haunch of Venison Gallery in London. The exhibition, titled *Richard Long: Human Nature*, combined text, wall drawings, floor sculptures and photographs (Figs. 38 and 39). Until this exhibition, I had only seen one or two of Long's sculptural arrangements in museum collections. Initially, I found it difficult to see the direct linkage to walking and often felt uncertain about the motivation for bringing rocks from various places into the gallery, with ephemerality and reduced environmental impact such strong considerations in his thinking. At this exhibition in London, however, I was able to experience the text works in relation to wall drawings, stone arrangements, photographs and maps. What struck me was how the embodied nature of the gestural wall drawings brought human touch into the space; the stone floor sculptures, the tactile or physical land itself; the photographs, a sense of memory and trace; and the text works, a strongly conceptual and poetic device. These individual elements in combination and conversation translated the walking process. The arrangement brought together the sensory and tactile experience of place with the conceptual. It also spoke to the processes of planning, mapping, navigating and notating, which are inherently part of walking and art-making.



Fig. 38 Richard Long, *Human Nature* exhibition, Haunch of Venison Gallery, London, 2011.



Fig. 39 Richard Long, *Human Nature* exhibition, Haunch of Venison Gallery, London, 2011.

Whilst acknowledging the specifics of place as fundamental to the creation and outcome of an artwork, Long also emphasises a universality in his work. The materials he chooses to use are elemental and the forms are basic to all human cultures.

I am interested in the universals: stones, water, mud, hands, days, circles, symmetry, gravity, footpaths, and roads. Walking is universal; we walked out of Africa for the first time as humans, on foot (quoted in Brindley 2015, p. 117).

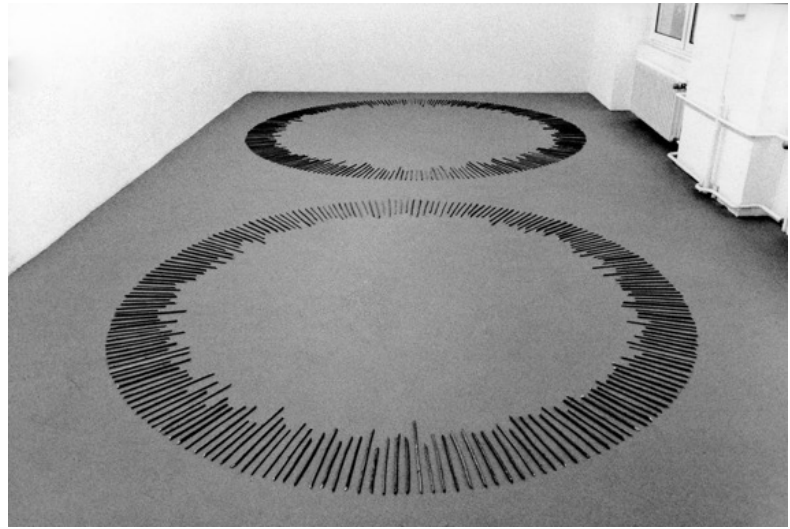
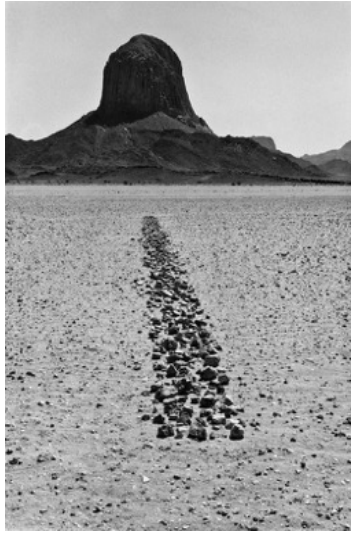


Fig. 40 (left) Richard Long, *Sahara Line*, 1988; Fig. 41 (right) *Circle of Time Sticks and Circle of Memory Sticks*, 1995.

Connecting with the fundamental human bipedal movement and being in interaction with the environmental elements, directs many walking artists towards universal forms to express core ideas. These forms can be found in the bodily action itself – rhythm, repetition and cadence; in the engagement with the land – dirt, rock, wood, fire and water; and in the human-made marks within the land: the pathways, tracks, desire lines, as well as the places of pause: the resting and meeting places, cairns and junctions. These elements make up a walking engagement, and each invites a particular visual translation. For Long, the circle and the line are reoccurring forms used to re-present very particular ideas. The line presents ideas about distance, time and movement, and the circle – a closed or enclosed line – presents a pause, a rest, a gathering or a boundary.

Long talks about the power he finds in the universality in these images – images that have been used throughout human history to mark and symbolise existence and social relation.

There are a lot of things theoretical and intellectual to say about lines and circles, but I think the very fact that they are images that don't belong to me and, in fact, are shared by everyone because they have existed throughout history, actually makes them more powerful than if I was inventing my own idiosyncratic, particular, Richard Long-type images (quoted in Cork 1991, p. 250).

It is important to note that Long's walking practice has not been without criticism. Rebecca Solnit, for example, raises his emphasis on universal concepts and imposition of an English walking tradition on other places as problematic. She suggests that Long's practice could be seen as a form of colonising (2001, p. 272). In exploring Long's work, I have also examined this potential reading of his practice. I am unsure of the ethical considerations he takes when planning a walk in another country; however, researching and listening to a number of interviews with Long, I recognise a deep respect for the particularities of the places he walks.

The line and the loop are reoccurring forms that present specific ideas within my own practice. The line expresses motility – an extension or a propulsion of myself into and through place. The loop expresses rhythm, repetition and returning – a generative folding and reflection of where I am and where I have come from.

In my words:

*I enact a line of movement –*

*and then I pause.*

*Reflecting on what has been...*

*I propel myself forward.*

*Only to repeat this again.*

It is the combination of these movements – the line into the loop – that ties together my growing understanding of place. In *Life of Lines*, Tim Ingold discusses the action of knotting. The knot is the emergent outcome of knot-tying, which 'involves the formation of a loop, through which the tip of the line is then threaded and tightened' (2015, p. 19). Ingold's description of the choreography of looping is analogous to the way I conceptualise my own 'iterative' gathering and making process. I gather the idea or material and reflect upon it, before leading or propelling the next action.

The choreography of looping is of particular interest because of the way in which an arching or circular gesture that gathers in or retrieves the material simultaneously creates an opening through which it can be further propelled, in a rhythmic alternation that bears comparison with the beating heart and heaving lungs of the living body (Ingold 2015, p. 20).

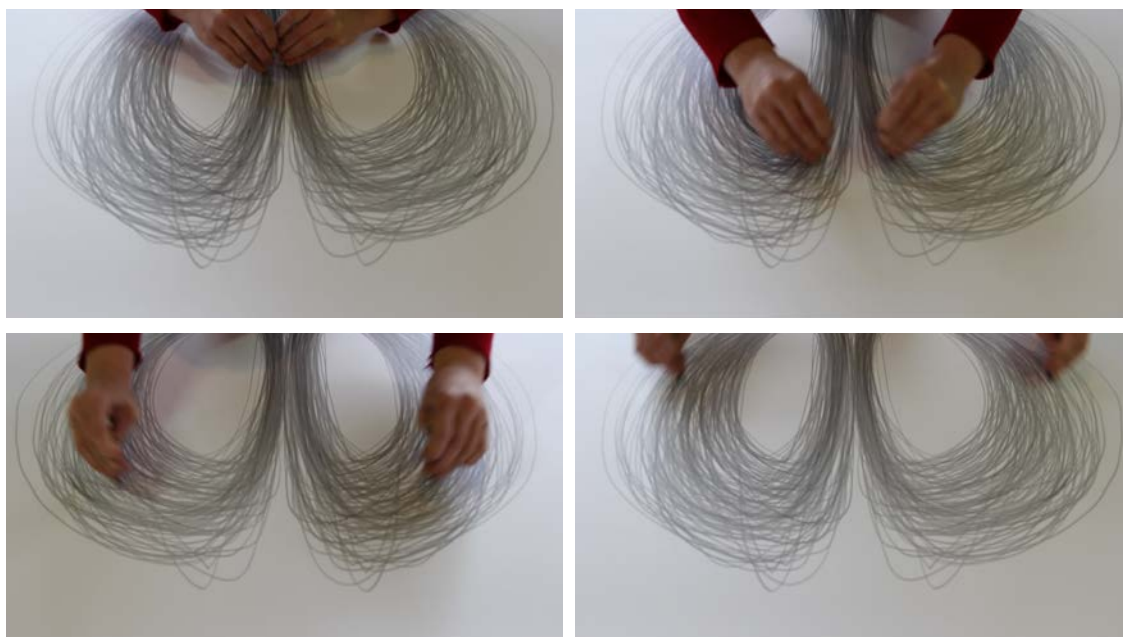


Fig. 42 Antonia Aitken, *walking, breathing, drawing: Knocklofty walk: 24.9.2016*, , 2016, HD video documentation, graphite on Magnani lithography paper.

Looping is reflected throughout my entire project and body of work. This generative gesture is reflected in my ritualised walking of looped pathways, in the repetitive action of recording my breath through drawing, the printing of a woodcut, the shredding of a print, and in the iterative unfolding of the body of artwork itself. This process, as Ingold suggests, is mimicked in the physical living body.

By the action of walking slow rhythmic pathways through place, artists and thinkers have come to recognise and articulate the way mobility enables an intimate entanglement of internal and external experience. Meandering the tributaries of the mind through embodied action heightens the intrinsic plurality and knotting of our own time, enabling us to leave the treadmill of Western linear timeframes. Linking to the aims of my project, being able to shift linear time concepts through process, invites me to contemplate Indigenous time models that re-orientate us towards a future origin. This fundamental shift in thinking allows the past to be in conversation with the present, placing us into direct proximity with our history. Importantly, these co-mingled or knotted perceptions of time open up the possibility for genuine ethical responsiveness.

## 4. Chapter 4 | Walking contested ground

### *Walking production and pleasure zones*

#### *Extract from 'shelter', 19.4.2015*

*Knocklofty is a shelter – a sanctuary for human and non-human alike. A place to retreat from the city and a corridor to the Mountain. I walk there almost daily and it too is a form of shelter for me – a temporary moment of rest from the endless brain commentary and noise of communal life. It provides a place where the space of not knowing is full of possibility. A space to be internally quiet, to gently untangle my seemingly disjointed thoughts and weave them together through the action of walking its network of pathways.*

When I began walking in Knocklofty, having found myself up there in the early stages of the project, I wondered why I had chosen yet again to situate my thinking and process in a nature reserve. This question made me contemplate and research the definition of a reserve. Reserves in Australia (or *protected areas*, as they are now called under the National Reserve System) are 'conserving examples of our unique landscapes, plants and animals for future generations' (*About the National Reserve System* 2017). They can be for public access and leisure activities in addition to their environmental protection. By exploring the idea of the reserve here, I want to look at the ways that Indigenous and non-Indigenous philosophies conceptualise notions of reserve differently. The governing systems we have used to categorise places as reserves very much inform our experiences and perceptions of these places.

I am mindful that walking is not inherently dialogical or ethical. Walking within the context of a reserve in settler-colonial places can be problematic when prior relationship to country is not considered by those participating in uncritical, retreat-like leisure activities. This is explored in the work of contemporary Aboriginal artist, Julie Gough, and writer, Saskia Beudel. Within the context of Australia, and in particular Tasmania, walking has a history of violent conquest. Something I have become highly aware of through the project, most markedly when walking on Country with Aboriginal friends, peers and students. It is important when exploring walking as a methodology to acknowledge these tensions as problematic aspects of walking.

The making of reserves has been part of human cultural practice for millennia. These areas were 'removed from everyday access and resource use, the abodes of nature spirits and

powers with which people communed but did not interfere' (Stevens & De Lacy 1997, p. 9). Deborah Bird Rose's book, *Nourishing Terrains* (1996), explores the conflicting notions of reserve within an Australian context. In many Australian Aboriginal societies, these areas have a prohibition on hunting and gathering; they are 'a refuge in which the particular species, and all other species who use the area, are safe from human predation' (Rose 1996, p. 49). They are often the breeding grounds for specific species, contain rare foods that can only be harvested at certain times of the year, or are vital fresh water sources. These sites are also often places of sacred significance – sites believed to be at the heart of creation, where life is generated and where the spirit returns after death. (p. 50). Therefore, the care and welfare of these reserves impacts the wellbeing of the ancestors, humans and non-humans who inhabit it. These sites importantly represent a deep understanding that the health of humans is entirely linked to the welfare of these ecosystems. This is expressed by Arnhem Land elder David Burrumurra when he says, 'I understand the land and everything on it so you can manage it properly' (cited in Rose 1996, p. 79).

The Western environmental framework of national parks and protected areas is of relatively recent invention, and forms part of a complex history of European and North-American-derived concepts of wilderness (Rose 1996, p. 17). Whilst sharing core values of preservation and conservation for protecting biodiversity, maintaining sources of spiritual renewal and recreation, this model is based on a fundamental philosophical difference, as it is predicated on the separation of nature and culture. Coming from notions of natural or 'uninhabited' spaces, we consider our protected areas as empty or uncontaminated by culture (Stevens & De Lacy 1997, p. 10, Rose 1996, p. 18). In *Nourishing Terrains*, Rose raises some of the philosophical and cultural agendas that perpetuate notions of separation, one being an egocentric understanding of landscape, 'wherein one either sees oneself or one sees nothing at all' (Rose 1996, p. 18), which creates a form of blindness where no attempt is made to seek out what is actually there.

From my own experience, this sense of separation often makes us consider reserves as places we go to seek refuge from our daily urban lives, or as we commonly say to 'get away from it all' or 'find ourselves'. For a few hours or days, we can enter into that deeply enjoyable simplification of life where all you need to do is walk, set up camp, make food and focus on the immediate task.



The driving desire that so many of us have to put a pack on our backs and walk into the bush raises many questions. What is it that we are seeking? For me, it has often been to seek quiet from the noise and pressures of our urban existence. Whilst walking, I can think more clearly and broadly, and have necessary periods of idleness to let the pathways of my mind travel the many tributaries and the in-between spaces. It is also reflective of a longing for lost intimacy with land, which I explored more deeply in Chapter Two.

Walking as a form of retreat can deny a fundamental aspect of walking which is about *relating* – being aware that you are walking the path of others, that you are always negotiating cultural and physical terrain, that you are walking through an environment and often another's home. I have often met walkers who, despite being on the same walking route, the same track, camping at the same spot, will not say hello as you pass them. They seem to need to feel isolated and as if the experience they are having is unique, unable to be shared, something that will be corrupted by social interaction. British nature writer and walker Robert McFarlane refers to these self-isolating walkers in his book, *The Old Ways: A Journey on Foot* (2012). He reiterates that walking should 'enable sight and thought rather than encourage retreat and escape; paths offer not only means of traversing space, but also ways of feeling, being, knowing' (p. 24).

In her chapter, 'Of Walking Clubs and Land Wars', in *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (2001), Rebecca Solnit writes about the fundamental differences between the leisure walking or hiking traditions of the UK and the United States of America. The United Kingdom has right-of-way laws that, whilst being heavily restricted through the increasing privatisation of public lands, still allow for people to walk relatively freely via a network of connecting pathways, known as the *Old Ways*, through the commons and public lands. These pathways have been kept because of hard-won victories over the centuries, as economic interests and class divides have periodically challenged the rights of the citizen. Solnit suggests that Britain has held onto walking as an important cultural act. The wealth of literature that surrounds the act of walking demonstrates the understanding of walking not only as a health or fitness activity, but also as a way of spiritually upholding connection with land. This is something I experienced in 2011, when I walked in the Scottish Highlands. People still walked as both a spiritual activity and as a way of keeping the pathways alive.

Solnit contrasts British walking with the North American experience without rights-of-way. America's land-locked islands of protected areas, Solnit suggests, are reflective of a country that is 'rigidly divided into production and pleasure zones' (2001, p. 162). This divided landscape restricts particular activities to particular zones and ultimately inhibits access. One must drive to these places in order to walk freely. To a lesser degree, we have seen the same model of development in Australia, where private ownership restricts how we are able to engage with our environment. The separation of our domestic places from the world beyond is becoming ever greater as we reduce the corridors that connect public lands through the gridlock of private property. I would suggest that when we separate our *production and pleasure zones*, as Solnit puts it, we stop seeing ourselves as intimately part of, and responsible for, the places we walk.

Having grown up in Australia, where there are bounded public lands to wander in the form of urban footpaths, parks and reserves, I found myself feeling strangely uncomfortable whilst walking in Scotland. Despite understanding the idea of the right-of-way, I still could not shake off the sense of 'trespass' in my movements. I did, however, feel how immensely freeing it was to know I *could* wander through place without fear of prosecution. Out of respect, I interacted with landowners whose properties I needed to cross and, in doing so, built a thread of relations as I walked.

Walking without *permission* can present a contentious and uneasy set of questions about what we regard as *trespass* within the context of settler-colonial places. I will discuss this through the work of artist and Trawlwoolway woman, Julie Gough, and Australian writer, Saskia Beudel. Gough and Beudel's works touch on the implication of walking as pleasure and leisure activities in the context of Indigenous land.

In Australia, we cannot simply walk without acknowledging that walking was used as a colonising and overwriting practice to explore, discover and survey land with the intent of seizing and appropriating it for the colony. In the context of Tasmania, walking was specifically used as a military device during the frontier wars to not only seize land, but also to seize Aboriginal people with offensives such as the Black Line.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The Black Line was a military operation devised in 1830 to remove Aboriginal people from the 'settled districts' of Van Diemen's Land/Tasmania, driving them by intimidation into captivity on the Tasman Peninsula beyond the Eaglehawk Neck isthmus, where they could be indefinitely confined. The plan called on every settler who was fit to assist to join the effort. Between 7 October and 24 November 1830, over 2200 men were enlisted to march in lines towards the Peninsula. This operation resulted in the capture of only two Aboriginal people and was regarded as a failure costing half the annual budget for the colony in one exercise.

This particular history of conquest runs deep where I walk, and the trauma from this time still ripples. I have had many moments during the project that have made me highly conscious of this trauma, when I have felt the need to stop and ask myself how best to proceed with awareness and sensitivity.

***On trespass: Julie Gough and Saskia Buedel***

In her work, *Observance*, 2011–2012, Julie Gough explores the continued colonising of her land through forms of white ignorance (Figs. 43–45). In the 17-minute colour video work, the artist has filmed hikers with their packs and contemporary outdoor adventure gear walking the North-Eastern beaches of Tasmania – in her ancestral country, *tebrikunna*. The hiking groups are filmed from a position of distance, the camera appearing to surveil from hidden positions – behind a bush, a grassy dune, or from far across the beach. The groups of ‘uninvited walkers’, trek the beaches, dunes and inlets, walking somewhat aimlessly with a guide. What are they in pursuit of? Is this a quest for connection or meaning in the form of a ‘bush walk’? It is implied by the nature of the hand-held camera, which spies on the same groups through various terrain, that they are completely unaware of being both watched and of the knowledge of their trespass. They are walking uninvited on Aboriginal country.



Fig. 43 Julie Gough, *Observance*, 2012 (image stills), video projection HDMI, H264, 16:9, colour, sound, 17:09 mins.

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The gesture of removing of the Aboriginal communities from their lands in this way must have been terrifying (Boyce 2010, pp. 273–276, Reynolds 2012, pp. 61–62). In the written accounts of George Augustus Robinson on 26 November 1830, he describes those who were with him ‘in tears throughout the whole day’ (cited in Boyce 2010, p. 275).



Fig. 44 Julie Gough, *Observance*, 2012 (image stills), video projection HDMI, H264, 16:9, colour, sound, 17:09 mins.

Gough states:

*Observance* is all about trespass – “for they know not what they do”. The film is a meditation about history, memory, ancestry, and ongoing colonisation by anonymous groups of uninvited walkers, the descendants of the colonisers, the inheritors (according to Western legal systems) of our lands (Gough 2017, p. 154).

Throughout the duration of the work, Tasmanian Aboriginal words and English translations appear, hovering in the sky space of certain frames. *Kannownner* (free white man), *teeburrickar* (soldier), *woreraelinene* (tent) – these are some of the last words formed by Tasmanian Aboriginal People in their own language, before assimilationist policies banned the speaking of language on the Flinders Island settlement of Wybaleena.<sup>3</sup> ‘These last words’, states Gough, ‘of which I have used half in the film, are of introduced things – animals, objects and actions of violence and encounter’ (Gough 2017, p. 154).

<sup>3</sup> Flinders Island settlement of Wybaleena was the chosen location to exile 220 Aboriginal people in 1833. Over the following 14 years, 132 people died from disease and ill health. This site is seen by community and by many historians, writers and anthropologists as a forerunner to the twentieth-century concentration camps. The community on Wybaleena was prohibited from hunting or gathering local food and stripped of their culture through the enforcement of Christian and British values and practices (Reynolds 2012, pp. 79 -81).



Fig. 45 Julie Gough, *Observance*, 2012 (image still), video projection HDMI, H264, 16:9, colour, sound, 17:09 mins.

I saw this work exhibited in 2017 at the Ian Potter Centre at the National Gallery of Victoria as part of *Who's Afraid of Colour?* An exhibition of work by Aboriginal women artists, cultural leaders and innovators from across the country. *Observance* forced me to confront my ignorance and, more pointedly, my own bush walking practice – a practice informed by my Scottish heritage of ‘country’ or ‘hill walking’, a common land walking tradition that later changed in the context of settler-colonial places, such as Australia, when it became an activity associated with protected areas. As previously discussed, bush walking tends to happen within the bounds of a reserve – a place specifically identified as somewhere for communing with nature. The film raised niggling doubts that I have had about the ‘bush walk’ being an un-politicised, non-impacting practice of engagement with land, especially in the context of Australia. Bush walking, as Gough presents it, can be

deeply problematic when there is no attempt to acknowledge Aboriginal culture and land rights or abide by cultural protocols, resulting in what could be considered a form of colonialism.

In *A Country in Mind* (2013), Saskia Beudel writes about travelling and hiking in Central Australia, where permissions must be sought from the Central Land Council (CLC) to travel through Aboriginal country under the Northern Territory *Aboriginal Land Rights Act*, 1976.

When I went into the office to collect the permits, a CLC lawyer came into the foyer. We chatted for a while and then he said, ‘You know you’re not allowed to stop anywhere out there. Aboriginal People consider all the land to be sacred, not just parts of it. A *sacred site* is a misnomer. Wherever you travel you’ll be on sacred land’. As I walked up the riverbed towards Redbank Gorge, I thought of his words. Legally speaking we were within the bounds of the National Park, but the same concept applied equally – and could even be said to extend indefinitely to the very edges and beyond the continent, into water and skies. The lawyer’s tone had been part educative and part irritating, as if he were tired of standing there explaining such things. And I felt that same troubling sense of trespass I had on our first walk: not knowing if we’d transgressed, crossed a boundary that shouldn’t be crossed (Beudel 2013, p. 56).

The impact of settler colonisation throughout Australia – where frontier violence and the removal of people from ancestral lands sought to erase people, language and cultural knowledge from country – means that in many places these cultural protocols are often no longer known. As illustrated by Gough’s powerful video work, the ‘uninvited walker’ often enters a place completely unaware of being on sacred ground: when there is no clear process to learn protocols for engagement, we ignorantly trespass.

The lawyer Beudel encounters at the Central Land Council makes an important point: to Aboriginal people, all land is sacred. This is reiterated in Deborah Bird Rose’s work, *Nourishing Terrains*:

Here on this continent, there is no place where the feet of Aboriginal humanity have not preceded those of the settler. Nor is there any place where the country was not once fashioned and kept productive by Aboriginal people’s land management practices. There is no place without a history; there is no place that has not been imaginatively grasped through song, dance and design, no place where traditional owners cannot see the imprint of sacred creation (Rose 1996, p. 18).

How do we walk and engage with country in a way that respectfully acknowledges the existing, but often inaccessible, Aboriginal laws in the land? This problematic lack of shared knowledge is yet another example of the complex and uncharted terrain we walk as a society dealing with the damage and disconnection caused by settler-colonialism. As a result of this lack of dialogue, which could lead to shared meaning and understanding, we are prevented from forming deep dialogical relationships and gaining understanding of the complex systems of ancient law that underpin where we wander.

When I moved to Tasmania, I walked with much caution. I wondered how to walk with respectful steps that acknowledged the loss and trauma, whilst simultaneously celebrating the land as I experienced it with all its beauty, richness and interwoven histories. I was made aware that, whilst there was this horrific history to contend with, there was also much affection, wonderment and respect for the land amongst its communities. Whole movements of people who walk, stumble and meander, are making an attempt to know it.

There are those who will travel its surface whilst running the networks of fire trails for fitness, or for endurance with their heavy backpacks along the well-worn multi-day adventure tracks, but amongst them are also those who so deeply wish to understand and feel the porosity of their skin absorbing the places they encounter.

Whilst researching walking as a potential methodology within the creative arts and social sciences for enabling dialogue within settler-colonial places, I have found only a few examples. As explored in this Chapter, how we contemplate and respond to uncomfortable feelings of trespass and invasion and walk to build relations when confronted by silence in the land is an important part of a much-needed conversation. Saskia Beudel and Julie Gough are amongst a growing number of Australian scholars, writers and artists who are attempting to discuss the complex ethical dilemmas presented when we encounter lands that have ancient and sometimes unknown Aboriginal protocols sitting alongside Western protected areas governance. These are systems that inform and shape our access and understanding of a place in fundamentally different ways.

Commenting on her practice more broadly, Gough speaks of the power she feels when showing work within mainstream galleries to mainly non-Aboriginal audiences, where she can play the role of an ‘alienated interlocutor’: ‘I focus on being a kind of itch that



mainstream society needs to scratch, a thorn in its side, and an agent of memory for their deliberate amnesiacs, as well as for us' (Gough 2016, p. 20).

My research contributes to potential new approaches for settler Australians to enact ethical dialogue, using the moving body as a starting point. One of the key ideas towards a decolonised future – as explored by key Indigenous theorists, such as Unangax scholar Eve Tuck and Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson – is learning to live with the 'dis-location implicit in living in stolen land', rather than reverting to a common desire for what they term *settler emplacement* (Tuck & McKenzie 2015, p. 69). Settler emplacement is the desire for settlers to *resolve* the experience of dis-location, either by practising quasi-religious forms of cultural and spiritual appropriation or further endorsing ideologies of replacement of Indigenous cultures, including ideas of linear causality through which settler-colonialism can simply be 'modernized away' – the future state superseding the past (2015, p. 69)

By enacting a methodology that enables a process of constant becoming, fuelled by a generative looping motion found in the walking body and in my printmaking and drawing processes, I have begun to dissolve my longing for certain types of attachment. Attachment centred around desirous and impossible conceptions of home-place-attachment or belonging by means of a bounded plot-of-place (common to the settler place-making ideology) can be shifted through certain changes in thinking. Through embodied action, I have come to realise that place is porous and fluid and that a *sense of place* is informed by the linkage of multiple place relationships. This is enabling me to recognise that an unsettled relationship can be meaningful by virtue of its very complexity.

## Findings

### *Walking as a methodology towards decolonisation*

Whilst acknowledging that walking is not exempt from contestation in settler-colonial places such as *lutruwita* / Tasmania, this project aimed to test the use of a walking-based practice aligned with iterative making processes, such as printmaking and drawing, to nurture ethical relationships with place.

The artworks generated through the four-year research project have resulted from a walk on Bruny Island and a daily ritual of walking loops of relation from my place of dwelling into my immediate environment of Hobart. I have made works that record the embodied action of walking itself, as well as multiple iterations of forms experienced and gathered in place – most importantly, the holdfast and the shelter.

I have called my process a ‘generative looping’ – a term derived from an understanding of printmaking and drawing as iterative processes in which the visual outcomes continually unfold and reveal themselves through repetition, rhythm and layering. The same forms appear and disappear – concealed and revealed in the multiple printed, collaged and paper-cut forms. Explored in relation to Tim Ingold’s sociological theories of knotting, and his description of the choreography of looping, as an arching circular gesture that gathers, opens and propels, this iterative making process is responsive and never-ending.

The places I have walked and the studio have been sites of equal importance for the process. The walks have embedded experiences of place that were carried into the studio, and the studio enabled me to experiment with the entanglements of ideas and images at a larger scale, utilising new print and 3D-fabrication technologies. Using drawing, hand- and digital-cut relief prints, sound and video, I have arrived at a number of experiments or visual propositions. Throughout the project, I have remained in a continual state of testing and questioning – pulling, recycling and layering threads from my core visual forms, as I searched for ways to articulate particular concepts and experiences arising from my direct interactions with place.

The chosen works and their arrangement for the final exhibition reflect the physical and conceptual unfolding of my walking and making process. The final exhibition will be installed in response to the Plimsoll Gallery space and the way the various elements

communicate with each other in relation to the space. Throughout the process I have tested this approach to display.



Fig. 46 Antonia Aitken, studio test, 2015.



Fig. 47 Antonia Aitken, *Entangled* (install shot), Entrepot Gallery, 2016.



Fig. 48 Antonia Aitken, *Entangled* (install shot), Entrepot Gallery, 2016.



Fig. 49 Antonia Aitken, *Walking Matters* (install shot), Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, 2018.

Some works are small, others larger in scale; some are delicate, layered and camouflaged; some record the rhythm, labour and breath of the body in motion; some shift perspective from ground to body to air; some entangle, cluster and knot; and some document a stumble, trip or route that stopped or strayed mid-stride.

The chosen works mark the various stages of my developing relationship with this place and the conceptual thinking that accompanied these developments. Beginning with a sense of place panic led me to the curious and unexpected need to draw from and disrupt the mnemonic devices I had carried with me in the form of prints from other times and places, resulting in the series of collage and hand-shredded works *Carrying places* and *Shredded places*.

I moved out of place panic and into this place – walking, talking and researching the layers of narrative that inform an entangled history. The holdfast and the shelter became key forms, coming together as an ‘image cluster’ to describe this learning and my internal dialogue regarding attachment, loss and longing. The results have been the *holdfast iterations*: repetitions and transformations of this image cluster in the form of hand- and laser-cut matrices, animations and layered and hand-cut prints describing a shifting relation with place.

Through the process of slowed-down, embodied action, I have drifted many tributaries of thought and discovered the power in non-linear thinking to enable the merging of body and place. I have explored the slow, rhythmic motion inherent in walking, leading to works such as the *walking breathing drawings* that record the natural rhythms of breath in the walking body through drawing.

By situating this research within the interdisciplinary fields of critical place inquiry and walking-based practice, I have sought to link walking as a cultural practice with place-based thinking.

Walking has long been recognised for its beneficial effects on imaginative thinking, as demonstrated in Chapter Three. As the need for the walking body has shifted greatly over the last century through the automation of transport, walking has entered the realms of interdisciplinary research with a renewed enthusiasm. As a form of embodied social activism – and fuelling much contemporary art practice – walking-based practices are



generating a number of research hubs and public opportunities to move together. In the short period of this research project, there have been conferences, symposia, public walking events and a growing number of online collectives. In 2016, Clare Qualmann and Amy Sharrocks from the *Walking Artists Network* held a symposium titled ‘Walking Women’ (Qualmann & Sharrocks 2016), with the core aim of addressing the gender bias still present in the field of walking art. In 2013, just before I began this project, the University of Sunderland’s research group *W.A.L.K (Walking, Art, Landskip and Knowledge)* held an exhibition and symposia ‘Walk on: from Richard Long to Janet Cardiff: 40 years of art walking’ (Morrison-Bell et al. 2013), which documented the last 40 years of contemporary walking art and its future directions. Contributing to this field of walking art research and practice, I have collaborated with two Australian artists, Kirstie Rea and Rebecca Mayo, to bring our work together in *Walking Matters* (Aitken, Mayo & Rea 2018), an exhibition at Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, New South Wales in early 2018. This exhibition brings together our three respective practices which engage expanded forms of printmaking, glass and textiles, and are informed by the embodied action of walking to enact relationships of care, and seek deeper knowledge of the places we inhabit. This work, amongst other aims, intends to contribute to the exposure of women’s walking art practices in Australia.

My research contributes to an emerging discussion regarding walking as a creative and restorative practice in settler-colonial places and the navigation of the difficult considerations of invasion and trespass. There is a range of interdisciplinary creative research outcomes appearing in relation to migration, in light of the mass human movement that is currently taking place across the globe; projects which explore comparable ideas regarding boundaries, borders and zones of conflict and their impact on human mobility. However, little has been done with specific relation to settler-colonial places. Artists, such as Julie Gough and Marlena Creates, and writers like Saskia Beudel are touching this terrain in their work. I have followed and participated in a handful of other participatory and creative walking-based projects in Australia that are looking at walking as a tool for generating artwork and dialogue.

Some of the projects I have followed include *Buckinbong to Berrigo*, a project by artist led-organisation, The CAD Factory, based in Western New South Wales. In 2014, artists and community members walked a 40-km walk of healing from the Murrumbidgee River near Narrandera to a property in Birrego. The idea was ‘to acknowledge and understand

the local history of the Narrandera region; to honour the capacities of land and people to produce food and fibre; and to build cultural and ecological resilience' (McEwan 2014, p. 1). Artists presented artworks made for each campsite, and talks were given by local elders, farmers and community members. Their aim was to open up a conversation about history and possible futures that draws on the understanding of 'the inextricable ties between our bodies and the nourishing, productive terrains through which we walk' (pp. 1–2).

In 2015, I walked with a number of others from Geilston Bay on Hobart's Eastern Shore to GASP: Glenorchy Art & Sculpture Park in Hobart's Northern suburbs, as part of Margaret Woodward and Justy Phillips' project, *Fall of the Derwent*, 2015–16 (Phillips & Woodward 2016). Led by Aboriginal guide, Aaron Everett, and his two daughters, we travelled through Bedlam Walls, a significant Aboriginal midden and quarry site. This project was a year-long process of research-creation that included archival inquiry, walking, writing, making, recording and publishing as 'the artists entered into relation-with the river(s) Derwent as living events' (para. 4). The artists walked from the sea to the source of two Rivers Derwent – from Workington to Borrowdale in the UK, and from Blackmans Bay to leeawuleena in Tasmania. They shared their journey with community and invited individuals to walk and talk, contributing to their understanding of the River. Commissioned by GASP, the project resulted in a public artwork in the form of hydrographic score, and a 96-page text that can be accessed by scanning a QR code at GASP. Each download onto a personal tablet or smartphone is a unique version of the text, generated in response to the River's current energy storage levels, recorded by Hydro Tasmania via coded html (Phillips & Woodward 2016).

These projects are just two Australian examples of how walking is being used as a powerful methodology to connect and begin important conversations with our complex and contested grounds. Both projects aim to communicate the interwoven relationships and narratives between people, industry and our ecological systems. In relation to my own project, these works also play with non-linear, narrative, embodied and participatory methodologies of art production.

The emerging area of critical place inquiry is looking at these particular methodologies for research in and with places that face issues associated with the impacts of settler-colonialism, globalisation and environmental degradation. One concept that is



central to an ethic of decolonisation is mobility. Conceptualisations of place that reiterate repressive notions of fixity, impermeable boundaries and human-centred ownership are still sustained by the powerful modernist systems as discussed in Chapter One. These ideas prevent us understanding place as autonomous and dynamic – both bounded and porous and part of a web of interconnected place relationships. This is an understanding familiar to many Indigenous ontologies and also to a number of contemporary place philosophers, who are aiming, through their theory, to re-establish the importance of place. If we think of place in these terms, we will understand that the place where we stand is intimately connected to others – an approach that leads us to ideas of ethical obligation and collective responsibility.

Mobility is being explored as a fundamental concept for change. As so well-examined by Val Plumwood, Ross Gibson, Deborah Bird Rose and others, dissolving bounded plots of place – an idea so central to the settler ideology – is key to supporting reciprocal models of land care and ownership. Amongst Indigenous scholars, mobility empowers decolonial paths to self-determination, as expressed by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson when she writes, ‘I see mobility imbued with agency as resurgence’ (2017, p. 197).

In her exploration of decolonising approaches from a Nishnaabeg intellectual perspective, Simpson suggests that a decolonised future is only possible through the creation of a web of consensual relationships, propelled by embodied action.

We cannot just think, write, or imagine our way to a decolonized future. Answers to how to rebuild and how to resurge are therefore derived from a web of consensual relationships that is infused with movement (kinetic) through lived experience and embodiment (2017, p. 162).

Moving into relation with place, and navigating the various encounters and relationships as they emerge, is the approach I took to this project. Once I had escaped a sense of place panic, I set about on foot in *lutruwita* / Tasmania with no predetermined outcomes, but with an aim of examining how the embodied actions inherent in walking, printmaking and drawing processes might be used to sensitively navigate its physical and cultural terrain. The generative action of walking and making by way of looped pathways enabled me to simultaneously quiet and open the mind. Together, my three core methods of encounter operated as a process of orientation: embodied mapping through and into place. Importantly, this research process has opened up the possibility for me to understand my

place relationships as fluid and comprised of the many places we carry with us. It has also helped me to acknowledge the reality of settler dis-location, as a situation that has the potential to begin ethical dialogue, respectful of Indigenous claims to land.

I remained open through the process to happenstantial findings and to invitations to walk and talk with others. As a result of this process, I have formed foundations for further dialogue with this place, including important intercultural connections. I have also had the opportunity to test my methodologies through my own teaching pedagogy, which is enabling students to explore their own place understandings through iterative and embodied making processes.

I have found through this research process that my prints and drawings can speak to both past and present in their knotted reconfigurations. Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst suggest that this is also the case for our footsteps:

every step faces both ways: it is both the ending, or tip, of a trail that leads back through our past life, and a new beginning that moves us forward towards future destinations unknown (Ingold & Vergunst 2008, p. 1).

By taking the idea that every step faces both ways, projecting simultaneously into our past lives and opening up new possibilities, we can draw an analogy with the complex position in which we, as settler Australians, find ourselves. Here we stand at an intersection: to form meaningful shared pathways, we must: face and accept the legacy of our history; connect with our own entangled narratives of attachment, loss and longing; and seek out intimate, embodied and responsive relationships with place through our art-making from a position of acknowledgement. This process requires us to be comfortable with discomfort and displacement. Learning to be in this complex and entangled place relationship will find us sometimes tripping over and butting up against difficult boundaries and intercultural misunderstandings. However, these are an important part of finding shared understandings, knowledge and new imaginings.

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## Appendix A: List of Exhibited Works for Examination Submission

6 – 13 July 2018, Plimsoll Gallery, University of Tasmania, Hobart

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1. *Untitled 5* (holdfast iterations), 2018, woodcut print on mulberry paper, 96 x 131 cm.
2. *Untitled 1* (holdfast woodcut iterations), 2016, hand-cut and layered woodcut print on mulberry paper, ink and wash drawing on mulberry paper, 60 x 60 cm.
3. *Shredded places 6: Hill End (2013)*, 2015, hand-shredded mono print, dimensions variable.
4. *Shelter interior* (studio test), 2014, hand-cut woodcut print, 60 x 90 cm.
5. *Untitled 2* (holdfast form), 2015, laser-cut plywood, dimensions variable.
6. *Shelter 5*, 2018, hand-cut relief print on mulberry paper, dimensions variable.
7. *Untitled 3* (holdfast form), 2016, inked laser-cut plywood, dimensions variable.
8. *Untitled* (holdfast woodcut iterations), 2017/2018, HD video, 15:09 minutes.
9. *Untitled 2* (holdfast woodcut iterations), 2016, hand-cut and layered woodcut print on mulberry paper, ink and wash drawing on mulberry paper, 60 x 60 cm.
10. *Untitled 6* (holdfast iterations), inked laser-cut plywood (2016) and print on mulberry paper (2018), 120 x 180 cm.
11. *walking, breathing, drawing: Knocklofty: 21.9.2016*, 2018, HD video and sound, 32:17 minutes. Filming assistance Scott L. Clarkson & editing assistance Otis McDermott.
12. *Untitled 7* (holdfast iterations), laser-cut plywood (2016) and charcoal wall drawing (2018), 120 x 180 cm.
13. *Untitled 3* (holdfast form), 2018, laser-cut plywood, woodcut print, dimensions variable.
14. *Untitled 8* (holdfast iterations), 2018, woodcut print on mulberry paper, carved and inked laser-cut plywood, 120 x 180 cm.
15. *walking breathing drawing: Knocklofty: 21.9.2016*, 2018, charcoal wall drawing, sound (headphones).
16. *Untitled Scape 3*, (holdfast iterations), 2017/2018, hand- and laser-cut woodcut prints on mulberry paper.

Trestle tables:

Low

17. *Shelter 4*, 2018, hand-cut relief print on mulberry paper.
18. *Shredded places: Namadgi (2009)*, 2014, hand-shredded mono print, dimensions variable.
19. *Shredded places: Murrumbidgee River: Uriarra crossing (2011)*, 2014, hand-shredded woodcut print, dimensions variable.
20. *Shredded places: Murrumbidgee River: Uriarra crossing (2009)*, 2014, hand-shredded woodcut print, dimensions variable.

*High*

21. *Carrying places 1–5*, 2014/2015, collaged prints and drawings, 59 x dimensions variable.

## Appendix B: Documentation of Examination Submission

*Walking contested ground: navigating settler colonial place through drawing and printmaking* was exhibited at the Plimsoll Gallery, School of Creative Arts, Hunter Street Hobart, Tasmania from Saturday 6 July – Thursday 12 July, 2018.















## Education

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<b>Current</b>	PhD Candidate, College of the Arts, University of Tasmania, Hobart TAS
<b>2006</b>	Bachelor of Arts (Visual) with 1st Class Honours, Australian National University School of Art, Canberra ACT

## Solo Exhibitions

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<b>2018</b>	<i>Entangled Dialogues</i> - ANCA Gallery, ACT
<b>2016</b>	<i>Entangled</i> – Entrepôt Gallery, University of Tasmania, Hobart, TAS
<b>2014</b>	<i>Prospect</i> – Craft ACT: Craft and Design Centre, Canberra, ACT
<b>2012</b>	<i>Vestiges</i> – Women’s Studio Workshop Gallery, Rosendale, New York, USA <i>River</i> – Links Gallery, Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, NSW
<b>2011</b>	<i>River</i> – Reading Room Gallery, Soho, London, UK <i>Vestiges</i> – Megalo Print Studio + Gallery, ACT
<b>2009</b>	<i>Antonia Aitken: new work</i> - ANCA Gallery, ACT
<b>2008</b>	<i>Drawing Breath: Breathing Place</i> - M16 Artspace, ACT
<b>2007</b>	<i>Reading Namadgi</i> - theblueroof gallery, Tharwa, ACT

## Selected Group Exhibitions

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<i>Walking Matters</i> – Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, NSW (2018)
<i>Performing Drawing</i> – National Gallery of Australia (2018)
<i>As Far as the eye can see</i> – Blue Mountains Cultural Centre, Katoomba, NSW (2016)
<i>City of Hobart Art Prize</i> – Tasmanian Museum and Gallery, TAS (2015)
<i>Burnie Print Prize</i> – Burnie Regional Gallery, TAS (2013)
<i>Temporary Residency 4: Queenstown</i> – Land Art Research Gallery, Queenstown & Sawtooth, Launceston, TAS (2013)
<i>Libris Awards</i> – Artspace Mackay, QLD (2013)
<i>100% Books</i> – Watson Arts Centre, ACT (2013)
<i>Talking Water</i> – Craft ACT Craft and Design Centre, ACT (2013)
<i>Fine Lines</i> – ANU School of Art Foyer Gallery, ACT (2012)
<i>Burnie Print Prize</i> – Burnie Regional Gallery, TAS (2011)
<i>Caring for Land</i> - Australian National Botanic Gardens Gallery, ACT (2007)
<i>Residue</i> - M16 Artspace, ACT (2007) – curated by me
<i>Trouble</i> - ANU School of Art Gallery, ACT (2007)

## Awards, Prizes and Residencies

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<b>2015</b>	Artist-in-Residence, ANU Printmedia and Drawing Workshop, ANU (ACT)
<b>2013</b>	Temporary Residency 4, Land Art Research Queenstown (LARQ) Studio & Gallery, TAS ArtsACT Artist-in-Schools Residency, ACT
<b>2012</b>	Bathurst Regional Gallery Hill End Residency, NSW Craft ACT Talking Water Artist-in-Residence, Namadgi National Park, ACT

- Women's Studio Workshop AIE Artist Book Fellowship, Rosendale NY, USA
- 2011** Black Church Print Studio International Artist-in-Residence, Dublin, Ireland  
 Women's Studio Workshop AIE Spring Fellowship, Rosendale NY, USA  
 Capital Arts Patrons Organisation Reading Room London Exhibition Award  
 Burnie Print Prize Finalist
- 2009** ArtsACT Project Funding Grant recipient  
 Bundanon Trust Residency, NSW
- 2008** Bathurst Regional Gallery Hill End Residency, NSW  
 Regional Arts CASP Grant  
 ArtsACT Out of Round Funding Grant
- 2005** NAVA Visual Arts and Crafts Artist Grant
- 2006** ANU EASS Megalo Print Studio Residency Award  
 ANU EASS M16 Exhibition and Studio Space Award
- 2005** Winner ANU School of Art Drawing Prize

### **Collections**

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National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia  
 Artbank Collection, Sydney, Australia  
 Wagga Regional Art Gallery, NSW, Australia  
 Library for the Artist's Book, Sydney, Australia  
 Mackay Regional Council Artists' Book Collection, QLD, Australia  
 Artist book collections in the USA include: Indiana University (Bloomington), Rochester Institute of Technology, University of Delaware, Vassar College, Virginia Commonwealth University, Yale University, University of Michigan and Library of Congress  
 Women's Studio Workshop, Rosendale, NY, USA  
 Black Church Print Studio, Dublin, Ireland

### **Professional Experience - Teaching + Arts Management**

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Lecturer, Printmaking, College of the Arts, UTAS (2014 - Current) &  
 Lecturer, Printmedia & Drawing, ANU School of Art (2009 – 2012)  
 Press Studio Manager, Megalo Print Studio + Gallery (2007 – 2011)  
 Edition Printer, Basil Hall Editions (2012 - ongoing)  
 Art Tutor for *Messengers* Youth Outreach Program, Tuggeranong Arts Centre (2007 – 2009)  
 Drama Tutor, Canberra Youth Theatre Company (2003 – 2008)

### **Specific Project Facilitation**

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- 2013** Art Tutor, KaPOW Wagga Wagga Art Gallery Artist in Schools program at Eurongilly Primary School, NSW  
 Artist in Residence, ArtsACT Artist in Schools Program, Evatt Primary School, ACT
- 2012** Art Tutor, Art-in-Education Program at Women's Studio Workshop, Rosendale NY, USA  
 Art Tutor, Saturday Space Drawing Program for Belconnen Art Centre, Canberra ACT  
 Art Tutor, Hill End drawing workshop for Stanislaus College, Bathurst NSW
- 2010** Art Tutor, Australian Talented Young People Project (ATYP), Australian National University  
 Resident Artist / tutor, Majura Women's Group Backyard Project, Canberra ACT  
 Art Tutor, National Gallery of Australia Exhibition Public Programs, Canberra ACT

- 2009** Art Facilitator, Kalkarindji Women's Safe House Mural Project, NT  
Art Tutor, Crossing Boundaries Project, M16 Artspace, Canberra ACT  
Guest Artist / Tutor, National Museum of Australia Family Day Festival, Canberra ACT
- 2008** Arts Facilitator / Tutor, Hill Shadows Program, Hill End + Bathurst Regional Gallery, NSW  
Art Tutor, Australian National Botanic Garden's Caring for Land Holiday Program, Canberra ACT